

Agonistic Tendencies

The role of conflict within institutionally supported participatory practices.

THESIS

Anthony Gordon Schrag

Practice-Based Doctorate of Philosophy
School of Arts and Cultures
June 2015

All Contents Copyright Anthony Schrag 2015

All Contents Copyright Anthony Schrag 2015

Abstract

In the UK, over the past two decades, participatory art practices – particularly those funded by Government/Local Authorities – have been employed to address issues such as community cohesion, social inclusion, or to assist groups perceived as marginalised. This has created an over-arching impetus for this kind of work to be ameliorative, seek consensus and eradicate conflict. The public sphere, however, is an inherently conflictual zone, constructed of debate, discourse and difference, and this creates a disjuncture between the intention of commissioning participatory practices and what these practices can feasibly achieve. This research examines the place of conflict in institutionally commissioned participatory art projects. Defining ‘conflict’ as the iterations of power that challenge the certainty of our hegemonies and/or our place within the world, it aims to address the instrumentalisation of the practice and asks: *how can conflict be productive in participatory art practices?*

Through practice-led research enacted through a series of carefully considered residencies in institutions which influence or enact participative arts practices (for example, a local authority, museum, and educational establishment), the research introduces the notion of conflict to problematise the discourse around institutionally-enacted participative projects and, in particular, the intent of the institutions and/or its underlying policy. Moreover, the adopted methodology of physicality operates as a material “that does not intimidate” (Thomas Hirschhorn, 2000) and one which can act as both a mechanism of engagement to reach a wide cross-section of the public(s), but also a form through which to ground discourse in the very embodied nature of participatory work.

The research is significant as the vast majority of participatory artworks now occur within institutionally-supported contexts via funding from arts-council and trusts, or through educational/outreach remits. It draws on Chantal Mouffe’s notion of agonistic pluralism to inquire into the relationship between institution, artist and public. It reveals that conflictual participatory artworks are able to not only uncover, but also challenge, the (often hidden) instrumentalised approaches of institutions. This agonistic conflict is productive in ensuring the agency of all participants (including those within the institution), but also in exploring the critical, ethical and political potentials of this way of working. The unique contribution to the field lies in the development of productive relationships *with* institutions, and this approach stands apart from the traditional activist and/or political works that seek an ‘exodus’ from pre-existing systems. Additionally, it unravels the critical discourse on the practice currently dominated by the almost binary opposition from critics Grant Kester and Claire Bishop and presents a novel synthesis of their thinking in the form of a ‘conflictually dialogic’ approach.

The aim of the research is to provide new ethical and political understandings of the emancipatory possibilities of participatory practices. Standing in contrast to ameliorative approaches, this work reveals conflict to be an ineradicable yet productive element of the social realm, and advocates practitioners, publics and institutions embrace its productive aspects. These include fostering multiple – and egalitarian – perspectives, an ability to resist an “oppressive consensus” (Rancière, 2004) of inclusion, proposing new productive relationships with institutions and publics, as well as developing critical art. It demonstrates how conflict can provide the ‘potential for transformation’ that does not defer to specific formulations of politics, but rather reveals new subjectivities and makes visible the smooth functioning of dominant hegemonies. Finally, it presents physical methodologies as an integral aspect of participatory practices. These findings are significant in contributing to a professional, critical and academic re-conceptualisation of participatory practices.

Acknowledgements

Venda Pollock – my Captain – is an amazing supervisor. I am utterly indebted to her for her support, insight, eagle-eyed critique and friendship throughout this process. The ‘other two guys’ – David Butler and Giles Bailey – have also been incredible and similarly deserve my undying gratitude. Any flaws within this thesis are not a representation these excellent people, but are my responsibility alone.

I also wish to thank those people and organizations that have helped me unravel the questions of this research: Anna Vermehren from Timespan, Mark O’Neill and all at Glasgow Life, Katie Bruce at GoMA, Gayle Nelson and the Cupar Art Festival folks, Jason Williamson, Fiona Mair and all at the Aberdeen Art Gallery, Stefan Horn from 9UB, Lilli Kobler from Goethe Institut, Munyaradzi ‘Chati’ Chatikobo and everyone else at Drama for Life, the Rua Red team, Claudia Zieske from Deveron Arts and those at Artworks: Scotland. I would additionally like to thank artists and thinkers David Harding, Barbara Steveni, and Cameron Cartiere for helping me along the way with such kindness and enthusiasm.

Colleagues and friends from Newcastle University and beyond – Amy Fung, Alice Finbow, Douglas McNaughton, Kate Stobbart, Emma Balkind, Peter Merrington, Ruth Barker, Victoria Hollows and Vaughn Sadie – have been a great help in whiling away the long hours of PhD bleakness. David Stevenson is particularly generous with his guidance, constant inspiration, challenge and friendship. Alexia Mellor needs to be thanked for being an amazing collaborator, thinker, artist and for the occasional ‘Classic Spritzer’ to get us through the afternoon.

I’d also like to thank Explosion In The Sky for providing an appropriately titled and effective soundtrack to the writing process.

My family have given me endless support. Without them, I’m nothing. Quite literally: without their un-wavering support, I would have not come a fraction of the distance I have travelled. I owe them everything. Additionally, our familiar trait of endlessly arguing about any-and-everything is probably the inception of this research. I’m glad it finally has a use.

Finally and most importantly, Iain Gardner for being the best husband and greatest support.

Table of Contents	Page
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Illustrations	vii
1. Introduction	
1.1 The (Potential) Transformative Power of Participatory Art	1
1.2 Conflict and Physicality	5
1.3 Chapter Breakdown	6
2. Participation: Who We Are To Each Other, And Why	
2.0. Introduction	9
2.1 A Metaphor of Productive Conflict	9
2.2 Current Frameworks	10
2.3 The (Impossible) History of Participatory Arts	14
2.4 The Words We Use	20
2.5 The Ethical Pirouette (or: The Stone Thrower)	24
2.6 Conclusion	27
3. Institution & Participatory Artworks: Beyond The Administered World	
3.0 Introduction	29
3.1 Bodies of Governance	29
3.2 'Cultural Policy' Vs. 'Institutional Intent'	32
3.3 Implicitly and Explicitly Billy Elliot (The Dance of Art and Governance)	36
3.4 Education Vs. Participation	40
3.5 Exodus vs. Engagement	42
3.6 Not Institutional Critique	47
3.7 Conclusion	49
4. Conflict: Actors in Pursuit of Incompatible Goals	
4.0. Introduction	51
4.1 Conflict and Utopia: The Red Book and the Black	51
4.2 The Personal Is Political – Conflict in Context	53
4.3 Natural Conflict	55
4.4 Society In Conflict	60
4.5 The Art of Conflict	64
4.6 Conclusion	71
5. Physicality: A Methodology	
5.0 Introduction	72
5.1 Memory of Balance	72
5.2 The Aesthetics of Physicality (Or: A Non-Visio-centric Ontology)	73
5.3 Embodied Cognition	78
5.4 Collaborative Anthropology and The Anthropology of the Body	81
5.5 Conclusion	85
6. The Work: Practice-based Research in Action And Reflection	
6.0 Introduction: When a project is an artwork & a work is also an artwork	86
6.1 Timespan: There Will Be Blood	87
6.1.1 Timespan: Riots and Conflicts	90
6.1.2 Timespan: Policy versus Institutional Intent	92
6.1.3 Timespan: The Movement Of Bodies	94
6.1.4 Timespan: Conclusion	96
6.2 Glasgow Life: Policy Artefacts	97
6.2.1 Glasgow Life: The Culture Police	98
6.2.2 Glasgow Life: A Very Big Divider	99
6.2.3 Glasgow Life: Conflict Physicality	101
6.2.4 Glasgow Life: Conclusion	103
6.3 GMRC: Biting The Hand That Feeds & GLC: Testament	104
6.3.1 GMRC: Biting The Hand That Feeds	104
6.3.2 Glasgow Life Choir: Testament	107

6.2.3 GMRC & Glasgow Life Choir: Conclusion	108
6.4 Rua Red: Things Will Change	108
6.4.1 Rua Red: Rethinking Approaches	108
6.4.2 Rua Red: Known Methodologies	111
6.4.3 Rua Red: Conclusion and Tangential Learning	113
6.5 Atelier Public#2: Make Destruction	114
6.5.1 Atelier Public#2: A 'state aesthetic' of participation	115
6.5.2 Atelier Public#2: On Successful Short Term Engagement	119
6.5.3 Atelier Public#2: Agonistic Relationships	120
6.5.3 Atelier Public#2: Institutional Resurgence	120
6.5.5 Atelier Public#2: Conclusion	122
6.6 Aberdeen Art Gallery: We All Cast Shadows	122
6.6.1 Aberdeen Art Gallery: Art Gallery Invasion Force	123
6.6.2 Aberdeen Art Gallery: A Short Note On Collaborations	124
6.6.3 Aberdeen Art Gallery: We All Cast Shadows	125
6.6.4 Aberdeen Art Gallery: Conclusion	126
6.7 Drama For Life: Privilege Is A Prison	127
6.7.1 Drama For Life: Participatory Performances	128
6.7.2 Drama For Life: The School of No and other challenges	130
6.7.3 Drama For Life: Parallel Productively Conflictual Projects	134
6.7.4 Drama For Life: A Short Note On An Embodied Approach	137
6.7.5 Drama For Life: Conclusion	138
6.8: Conclusion: Pro-Social Conflict	139
7. Conclusion	
7.0 Conclusion	140
Appendix I – The Work	144
T – Timespan: There Will Be Blood	145
GL – Glasgow Life: Policy Artefacts	152
GMRC – Glasgow Museums: Our Museums Belong To Someone Else	170
RR – Rua Red: Things Will Change	173
GLC – Glasgow Life Choir: Testament	179
C – Cupar Art Festival: Pigheaded Justice	180
AP – Atelier Public#2: Make Destruction	182
I – Iceland Invasion: Charm Offensive	184
AAG – Aberdeen Art Gallery: We All Cast Shadows	185
DFL – Drama For Life: Privilege Is A Prison	189
Appendix II – Ethics	200
Appendix III – Parallel Storytelling	201
Bibliography	221

List of Illustrations

Chapter 1

- Fig 1.1 Photographic Documentation and Research images from *Legacy Of City Council Art Works*, 2008. (Note: if image is uncredited, copyright is held by author).
Fig 1.2 *Legacy Of City Council Art Works*, Photographic documentation, 2008.

Chapter 2

- Fig 2.1 *BOOM!*, Digital montage of Grant Kester and Clare Bishop, May 2013.
Fig 2.2 *The Ambassadors*. Hans Holbein, The Younger, 1553, Oil on Oak. 207 cm × 209.5 cm, National Gallery, London.
Fig 2.3 *Interacting Spheres of Participation*, Venn Diagram, 2014.

Chapter 3

- Fig 3.1 *Detail of caryatids on St Andrew's House, Edinburgh*, Digital photograph, 2013.
Fig 3.2 *Production Still of Billy Elliot featuring Jamie Bell*, Director: Stephen Daldry, BBC Films. 2000.
Fig 3.3 *The Place of Education & Participation In References To The Interacting Spheres of Participation*. Venn Diagram, 2013.

Chapter 4

- Fig 4.0 *The Author firing a semi-automatic machine-gun when he was 6-years old*, Allan Schrag, Colour Photograph, 1981.

Chapter 5

- Fig 5.1 *The Author as a child, balancing*, Ann Schrag, Polaroid Photograph, 1982.
Fig 5.2 *Things To Do – China*. Lesley Booth, Digital Image, 2005.
Fig 5.3 *Flag*. Alice Finbow, Digital Image, 2010.
Fig 5.4 *Wall Hanging*. Ben Premeaux, Digital Image, 2012.

Chapter 6

- Fig 6.1 *Push*, Photographic documentation, 2008.
Fig 6.2 *Exterior of Timespan*, Digital Photograph, March 2013.
Fig 6.3.1 *Badges*, Photographic documentation, January – February 2013.
Fig 6.3.2 *Badges*, Photographic documentation, January – February 2013.
Fig 6.3.3 *Badges*, Photographic documentation, January – February 2013.
Fig 6.4.1 *Re-Riot*, Photographic documentation, January – February 2013.
Fig 6.4.2 *Re-Riot*, Photographic documentation, January 2013.
Fig 6.5.1 *History On Trial*, Photographic documentation, February 2013.
Fig 6.5.2 *History On Trial*, Photographic documentation, February 2013.
Fig 6.6 *Climbing on The Emigrants statue*, Photographic documentation. January 2013.
Fig 6.7 *Shinty! The Old Ways*, Photographic documentation. March 2013.
Fig 6.8 *Shinty! The New Ways*, Photographic documentation. March 2013.
Fig 6.9 *Untitled Shinty Illustration from Penny Magazine*, London. Published 1823.
Fig 6.10 *A Very Big Divider*, Photographic documentation, January 2013.
Fig 6.11 *Scream In A Lift*, Photographic documentation, April 2014.
Fig 6.12 *Glasgow Life Fight Club*, Poster, June 2014.
Fig 6.13 *Move Different: Think Different* (as part of *Office Olympics*), Photographic

- documentation, May 2014.
- Fig 6.14 *Walks*, Photographic documentation, July 2013.
- Fig 6.15 *Common Room/Commonsroom*, Photographic documentation, July 2013.
- Fig 6.16 *The Artist is Weeding*, Photographic documentation, August 2014.
- Fig 6.17 *Alternative Cultural Works*, Photographic documentation, August 2014.
- Fig 6.18 *Tallaght, As If It Was A House*, Photographic documentation, September 2015.
- Fig 6.19 *Anonymous artwork, part of AtelierPublic#2*, Photographic documentation, 2014.
- Fig 6.20 *Anonymous artwork, part of AtelierPublic#2*, Photographic documentation, 2014.
- Fig 6.21 *Anonymous artwork, part of AtelierPublic#2*, Photographic documentation, 2014.
- Fig 6.22 *Anonymous artwork as part of AtelierPublic#2 (covered graffiti tag)*, Photographic documentation, April 2014.
- Fig 6.23 *Anonymous artwork as part of AtelierPublic#2 (uncovered graffiti tag)*, Photographic documentation, April 2014.
- Fig 6.24 *AtelierPublic#2 - Make Destruction*, Photographic documentation, April 2014.
- Fig 6.25 *AtelierPublic#2 - Make Destruction*, Photographic documentation, April 2014.
- Fig 6.26 *AtelierPublic#2 - Make Destruction*, Photographic documentation, April 2014.
- Fig 6.27 *Original Map of Events, as part of Placetime/Placetime project*, Digitally manipulated Google Map, March 2014.
- Fig 6.28 *Human Easter Egg Rolling*, Photographic documentation, April 2014.
- Fig 6.29 *Artists Re-imagining Of The Proposal for Aberdeen Art Gallery Collection Centre (Success/Failure)*, Digital Montage, May 2014.
- Fig 6.30 *Artists Re-imagining Of The Proposal for Aberdeen Art Gallery Collection Centre (Failure/Success)*, Digital Montage, May 2014.
- Fig 6.31 *Northfield Boxing Dialogues*, Alice Gamper, Photographic documentation, May, 2014. Image Copyright, Stuart Armitt, 2014.
- Fig 6.32 *Northfield Boxing Dialogues*, Alice Gamper, Photographic documentation, May, 2014. Image Copyright, Stuart Armitt, 2014.
- Fig 6.33 *Art Cannot Help You*, Photographic documentation, August 2014.
- Fig 6.35 *Privilege Is A Prison*, Photographic documentation, September 2014.
- Fig 6.36 *Privilege Is A Prison*, Photographic documentation, September 2014.
- Fig 6.37 *School of No*, Photographic documentation, July 2014.
- Fig 6.38 *School of No*, Digital Graphic (Venn Diagram) July 2014.
- Fig 6.39 *School of No*, Photographic documentation, July 2014.
- Fig 6.40 *JoBurg International*, Photographic documentation, August 2015.
- Fig 6.41 *Usindiso Singers*, Photographic documentation, August 2015.

Appendix

- Fig III.1 *Drawing included in West London Social Resource Project*. Copyright Stephen Willats, Paper and Pen, 1972-73.
- Fig III.2 *Diagram For Practice – 1*, Adapted Venn Diagram from PhD research, 2012.
- Fig III.3 *Diagram For Practice – 2*, Adapted Venn Diagram from PhD research, 2013.
- Fig III.4 *Squares of Influence*, Adapted Venn Diagram from PhD research, 2013.
- Fig III.5 *Systemic vs. Initiated Conflict*, Adapted Venn Diagram from PhD research, 2013.
- Fig III.6 *Conflict and Power: Galtung vs. Foucault*, Graphic from PhD research, 2013.
- Fig III.7 *Aspects of Conflict (The Blossom of Conflict)*, Adapted Venn Diagram from PhD research, 2013.
- Fig III.8 *Participation's Tree*, Graphic from PhD research, 2013.
- Fig III.9 *The Spheres of Participation*, Adapted Venn Diagram from PhD research, 2013.
- Fig III.10 *The Spheres of Participation - Education vs. Participation*, Adapted Venn Diagram from PhD research, 2013.
- Fig III.11 *Traditional Model of Institutional Interactions*, Adapted Venn Diagram from PhD research, 2013.
- Fig III.12 *Pyramid of 'Policy + Outcome' Feedback*, Graphic from PhD research, 2013.
- Fig III.13 *Relational Structure of Participatory Practices*, Adapted Venn Diagram from PhD

- research, 2013.
- Fig III.14 *Interacting Spheres of Politics, the Social and the Aesthetic*, Adapted Venn Diagram from PhD research, 2013.
- Fig III.15 *Trichotomy of Participation (Diagrams 1-7) - Diagram 7 shown*, Adapted Venn Diagram from PhD research, 2014.
- Fig III.16 *Types of Conflict and Their (Extreme) Ramifications*, Adapted Venn Diagram from PhD research, 2014.
- Fig III.17 *The Opposite of Nice*, Graphic from PhD research, 2014.
- Fig III.18 *The Opposite of Nice*, Adapted Venn Diagram from PhD research, 2014.
- Fig III.19 *Methodology*, Adapted Venn Diagram from PhD research, 2014.
- Fig III.20 *Diagrammatic Framing*. Graphic from PhD research, 2014.
- Fig III.21 *Practice (Generative vs. Responsive)*, Adapted Venn Diagram/Graphic from PhD research, 2013.
- Fig III.22 *Practice (Generative vs. Responsive)*, Adapted Venn Diagram/Graphic from PhD research, 2013.
- Fig III.23 *The Spheres of Participatory Art: 1 of 7*, Venn Diagram, 2014.
- Fig III.24 *The Spheres of Participatory Art: 2 of 7*, Venn Diagram, 2014.
- Fig III.25 *The Spheres of Participatory Art: 3 of 7*, Venn Diagram, 2014.
- Fig III.26 *The Spheres of Participatory Art: 4 of 7*, Venn Diagram, 2014.
- Fig III.27 *The Spheres of Participatory Art: 5 of 7*, Venn Diagram, 2014.
- Fig III.28 *The Spheres of Participatory Art: 6 of 7*, Venn Diagram, 2014
- Fig III.29 *The Spheres of Participatory Art: 7 of 7*, Venn Diagram, 2014.

1. Introduction



Fig 1.1 Photographic Documentation and Research images from *Legacy Of City Council Art Works*, 2008. (Note: if images are uncredited, copyright is with Author)

1.1 The (Potential) Transformative Power of Participatory Art

In 2007, The Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA) in Glasgow hosted the third iteration of its bi-annual Social Justice programme, exploring human rights and contemporary arts in relation to specific topics pertinent to the city. The programme had previously approached the subjects of asylum seekers (*Sanctuary*, 2002-3), violence against women (*Rule of Thumb*, 2004-5), and the third iteration was to explore sectarianism (*Blind Faith*, 2007).

The design of each programme featured a large, gallery-based exhibition in GoMA surrounded by smaller outreach and education projects that were more participatory in nature and intended to engage with various 'non-art' audiences for whom the organisers perceived the topic as relevant. Through an open-call for a socially engaged artist (to work in parallel with a writer-in-residence), I was selected to lead one of these outreach/education programmes with youth based in the east of the city – Toryglen, Easterhouse and Shettleston – and to explore the topic of sectarianism via a series of workshops that would culminate in a small exhibition at GoMA. The writer and I devised an over-lapping project that looked '*menchies*' (a Scots word for graffiti tags), as something related to both visual art and text-based work. We felt that *menchies* also lay at the intersection of geography and identity, which were salient to the theme of sectarianism.

Sectarianism is a historically contentious subject to address in Glasgow, perceived to be a major social blight due to the cultural divisions that run along religious, geographical and class lines.¹ As such, the socially engaged art projects were intended to have a transformative, ameliorative impact on the participants,² the hope being that

¹ See 'NFO Social Research' Glasgow City Council (825A), <http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=9735> January 2003, (Available online – Accessed 20 October, 2014); and R. Deucher and C. Holligan (2008) *Territoriality and Sectarianism in Glasgow: A Qualitative Study*. British Academy. For further information about sectarian experiences within Glasgow visit: Nil By Mouth: Challenging Sectarianism website: <http://nilbymouth.org>, (Available online – Accessed 12 January 2015)

² This is evident in the initial applications for the project: "The emphasis throughout the residency will be one of *social inclusion*, with the artist and writer working particularly with groups from Glasgow's communities that have high levels of deprivation, and little access to the arts, in line with the Council's

engaging in the topic of sectarianism through art would lead to a more tolerant society.³ Once the project began, however, it quickly became apparent to me that the issues the youth faced were only superficially based in sectarianism and were more the outcomes of systemic poverty. This revelation gave rise to the realisation that an art project based on a temporary engagement with a select group of youth could not alter this social inequality. Ethically, too, I was uncomfortable with fact that I was being paid a handsome sum to work with the unemployed, or children of the unemployed. The situation also challenged me to think about who were regarded as the appropriate subjects of participatory projects (in this case, the youth of specific marginalized, disempowered and impoverished communities) and in what way that appropriateness was formulated: i.e., the participants had been preconceived as somehow flawed or in need of fixing (because of sectarianism), and the institution (the council-funded GoMA) had placed itself in the dominant position of being able to provide that transformation. In other words, there was a perceived 'correct way of being' that the art project needed to socially engineer and which denied the agency and culture of the youth and community involved. As such, I felt there was a disjunction between the intentions of the institution and the lived reality of those who were the recipients of the project.



Fig 1.2 *Legacy Of City Council Art Works*, Photographic documentation, 2008.

I therefore focused on how to explore this mismatch, and instead of attempting an ameliorative intervention into the dispossessed youth, I attempted an intervention into the institution that instigated the project. Called *The Legacy of City Council Arts Projects*, the event invited the curators, advisory board, as well as the civil servants and representatives from the charitable trust who guided the project, to come to GoMA to discuss the “mismatch between place and policy.”⁴ However, when these people arrived, expecting a meeting in the neoclassical, marble structures of GOMA, I bundled them into waiting taxis to take them out to one of the areas of the project (Toryglen), thereby effectively ‘kidnapping’ these cultural workers.

policy of delivering its services equally to all.” (Emphasis original). Taken from *Application form for Organisations, 2006/07* submitted to the Scottish Arts Council seeking funding for “An Artist and Writer joint residency focusing on *identity, neighbourhood* and *nation*, addressing the issue of *Sectarianism* with community groups across Glasgow.” (Emphasis original) Submitted to Author by main applicant, Social Inclusion Officer Katie Bruce, Oct 2012. Issued by Scottish Arts Council, 2006.

³ “By using the power of contemporary art to challenge public attitudes we believe we can contribute to the development of a more tolerant society.” And: “Sectarianism are particular problems in these areas and the work of these groups in centred on tackling this through seeking new and alternative opportunities for their young participants to engage in.” Taken from *Application form for Organisations, 2006/07*, Ibid.

⁴ Quote from Mark O’Neill, then Head of Museums of Culture and Sport Glasgow, at *Legacy...* project. 21 October 2007

The intention of this event was to still have the proposed discussion, but to locate it outside the structures of power of a council-run, mediated art space. It was purposefully held in the very 'real', disrupt-able, cold and noisy place that was the everyday reality of the youth involved. The goal was fourfold: to make the mismatch physically apparent; invite everyone involved on the project to examine the institution's desire to 'work with the public;' to draw attention to the impossibility of their 'transformative' intentions; and to obliquely suggest that the institution, too, needed 'transformation'.

At the time, I did not have the academic language to explain the philosophical conceptualisation of *Legacy...*, rather, it came from a tacit understanding of power relations and a desire to subvert them. Now, reflecting on the project, I recognise that this work was the impetus of my current investigation, as it existed at the nexus of a collection of issues that are vital to examine in regards to participatory practices today. These issues are the background against which my research takes place, namely: the ameliorative instrumentalisation of participatory practices and the intentions of cultural institutions towards the public and artists with whom they work.

The project problematised the expectation of 'transformation' within participatory practices. To 'transform', in this context, meant to 'make better' and there was no apparent examination of the criteria on which 'better' was being defined. I realised that were I to attempt to transform the participants, I would be acting as a tool of the institution's social engineering approach. At the same time, the complex social issues that the youth faced suggested there did need to be some type of transformation, as their lives were undoubtedly impacted by those issues. Additionally, GoMA's paternalistic approach to the youth was ethically problematic and also suggested a need for some type of transformation of the institution's intentions towards them, however, as a single individual and (temporary) employee of the institution, I could not enforce nor expect their transformation. Finally, with both the youth and the institution, I recognised that I could not impose my own expectations of transformation onto either of them because, as an outsider to both contexts, I would be enforcing my own 'correct way of being' onto others and felt this to be an unethical approach.

This ethical issue with 'transformation' is one that participatory arts particularly face as artists work with real human lives – with their own agency, goals and desires – and not inert materials which can be shaped and moulded to their bidding, like clay or paint. However, as powerful institutions (such as funding bodies, galleries and museums which are, themselves, guided by policy) are able to offer remuneration in exchange for enacting their transformative projects, artists risk become tools of that apparatus when seeking employment. Participatory art and artists are therefore in constant danger of becoming instrumentalised to transform citizens in ways which might be unethical and impractical. The solution to the dilemma that I derived via *Legacy...* was to provide the *potential* for transformation that respected agency of both the institution and the community participants, but avoided ethical dilemmas or enforce any specific hegemony: it aimed to expose the flaws in systems, allowing those taking part to make choices and decisions about those flaws on their own terms.

In this respect, the intention of *Legacy...* was neither to be prescriptive about a cultural (or economic) solution to the problems the community faced, nor find a way to fix them (indeed, nor even assume they needed 'fixing'), nor was its goal to suggest 'political' changes (i.e. an alternative participatory art model) to the institution. Rather, my role was to *reveal* to both the participants and the institution the possible flaws in their intentions, policies and circumstances as a challenge that could invoke a potential for transformation on their own terms: it provided a critical and ethical methodology when working with people in the public realm. The theorist Chantal Mouffe also argues that critical art can make:

visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate, giving voice to all those who are silenced within the framework of the existing hegemony. There is, however, one point that needs to be clarified to avoid misunderstanding... critical artistic practices, according to this view, do not aspire to lift a supposedly false consciousness so as to reveal the 'true reality'. The transformation of the... social agent [with] a set of practices that will mobilise its affects in a way that disarticulates the framework in which the dominant identification takes place.⁵

In other words, the revelation of the frameworks of the existing hegemonies is not done in order to 'fix' that hegemony, nor replace it with a better one, but rather to mobilise the social agent in a way that he/she might examine the articulation of hegemony in a new way.

Mouffe refers to Alfredo Jaar as an artist who operates in this manner as his work does not follow the "fashionable emphasis on transgression and denunciation as the most radical forms of resistance,"⁶ but rather seeks to create within people a desire for change that moves people explore their own understanding of their particular hegemony. For example, in his 2000 work for the town of Skoghall, (Sweden) he created a temporary exhibition and art space out of paper, referencing the town's historical paper industry but also its lack of a permanent arts venue or "place for culture."⁷ After one day of exhibitions and cultural activity, he insisted the venue be burnt down, despite the citizen's pleas for the structure to remain, explaining he "did not want to impose on a community an institution that they had never fought for."⁸ Due to the proposition – and subsequent denial – of an alternative cultural hegemony, citizens of the town petitioned the local authority to construct a permanent arts institution and seven years later Jaar was invited back to assist in the design and construction of a Skoghall Kunstall. It was a project that explored not how the world *should* be, but how it *could* be. The work expresses how he is "convinced that the best way to move people to act is by awakening consciences of what is missing in their lives and bringing them to feel that things could be different."⁹ This desire for change is synonymous with my conceptualisation of a 'potential for transformation' and frames my definition of art, specifically in the context of participatory practices. It is also the criteria by which I understand ethical participatory projects. It is, as I argue below, a potential that can only arise out of a notion of 'agonistic conflict', also suggested by Chantal Mouffe:

Those [artists] who advocate the creation of agonistic public spaces where the objective is to unveil everything that is repressed by the dominant consensus are going to envisage a relation between artistic practices and their public in a very different way than those whose objective is the creation of consensus – even if that consensus is considered critical consensus. According to the agonistic approach, critical art is art that forms a dissensus – that makes visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate, aiming to give voice within the existing hegemony.¹⁰

The intention of an agonist intervention within the public space is not to make a total break with the existing order and suggest an alternative political utopia, but to subvert that order, and provide new subjectivities – i.e. that art provides a 'potential for transformation'. Furthermore, I agree with her that art can still have a political role, but

⁵ C. Mouffe. (2013) *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*. Verso, London. p. 93

⁶ Ibid. p. 94

⁷ Ibid. p. 96

⁸ Ibid. p. 96

⁹ Ibid. p. 94

¹⁰ C. Mouffe. (2007) 'Agonistic Politics and Artistic Practices' (Lecture) Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow, 2nd March.

the assumption that “radical art equals transgressive art, and the more radical, the more transgressive”¹¹ is a false assumption because “there is no transgression that cannot be recuperated by the dominant hegemony.”¹² Rather, the role of critical art is to subvert the hegemonies and disrupt its smooth functioning by bringing to the fore new subjectivities.¹³ As I expand in Chapter 4, it is my contention that this occurs via conflict, which I describe as: “the iterations of power that occur when a self/group collides with an ‘other’ and challenge the certainty of our hegemonies and/or our place within the world.”¹⁴

Within *Legacy*..., engaging in conflict with GoMA allowed me to productively challenge the institution’s intentions towards participatory artworks, draw out new subjectivities of *why* and *how* the institution had employed participatory art projects, and what these works could feasibly achieve. Crucially, I did not enforce my own understandings of these issues onto the participants, but presented the ‘potential for transformation’ that acknowledged the participants/institution’s own agency to address the issues raised, or not. In this manner, it contained a broader critique of the political and ethical ramifications of participatory projects, their instrumentalisation, and highlighted the necessity to examine the relationship between artist, institution and ‘general public’¹⁵.

This critique also successfully emerged because of the physical methodology I had employed, and physically moving people out of the institution was essential to the institution’s own reflection. The shifts in thinking emerged *because* of the shifted physical understandings, rather than visual contexts. Additionally, as the work had emerged from a residency-situation, where I was on-site and interacting with people and the institution on a daily-basis, it also clarified an ethical and relational approach to engagement with communities and institutions. In other words, the residency format was critical to the development of such community-based, context-specific and physical work. The work therefore formed the core tenets for my subsequent PhD enquiry in regards to physical methodologies, institutional intent and conflict within participatory practices.

1.2 Conflict and Physicality

Conflict, in my framing below, aims to disrupt the smooth functioning of hegemonies, especially those hegemonies that are supported and perpetuated by institutions that have the ability to oppress or unethically regulate a populous through their access to superior resources. The disruption of these hegemonies emerges from an ethical concern about ensuring the autonomy of individual human life. As participatory practices involve ‘participating’ with singular individuals or groups of autonomous humans, this is an essential consideration when ‘working with people’. This concept has given rise to my core research question:

How can conflict be productive with participatory art practices?

By productive, I do not refer to any capitalist notion of ‘production’ but instead use the word in relation to its ‘generative’ possibilities. In using this word, I am alluding to the ‘potential for transformation’ mentioned above, and this can have political, social, emotional or even personal ramifications, depending on the context of the artwork, but also to how it might shed light on the larger issues that face the practice, such as instrumentalisation by institutions. This pertains to a secondary research question:

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ This is equally true for artists who wish to enact their own political hegemony (i.e. activist artists), and I expand this discussion via Mouffe’s notion of ‘Politics’ vs. the ‘Political’ in Chapter 2.

¹⁴ See Chapter 4: Natural Conflict (p. 62)

¹⁵ I explore and expand this term in Chapter 2, (p. 12)

How can conflict reveal and challenge 'institutional intent' within participatory art projects?

The research took a practice-led approach, and was purposefully designed to evolve through a series of iterative residencies with various types of institutions and working with different types of communities to test different participatory contexts. As alluded to above, the residency context is essential within participatory projects as the artist is physically sited within the discourse of a project, allowing him/her to fully grasp the context and develop meaningful, shared and egalitarian bonds with participants (both the 'public' and the institution). This physical siting gives rise to the final question of this thesis:

What is the role of physical methodologies within participatory practices?

This question explores the non-visual ontologies present in participation, and is vitally important to explore in the context of participatory projects that involve all sorts of people who have all sorts of interests and do not necessarily have an affinity to visual aesthetics or the legacy of visual art – i.e. projects that are based in physical exchanges and located in a corporality. In this way, the question aims to inquire into ways of making art that are based on egalitarian interaction, rather than those that recapitulate the hegemony of visual art.

The practice-led approach with a focus on physicality underpins one of the study's two unique contributions to the field in that it uses the mechanism of physicality to act as both a tool of engagement, but also political critique. Challenging the emphasis on production of (visual) art objects, it sites the work in an ephemeral, corporeal exchange that engages participants in an aesthetics of physicality based on egalitarian interactions. Importantly, it suggests that this approach is essential within participatory projects as it provides both a non-visual approach to 'working with people', but also alternative tools of political critique.

Secondly, the role of productive conflict within participatory practices is vastly under-researched. There has been early exploration into this topic – i.e., Sophie Hope's PhD *Participating in the Wrong Way?* and Evi Tselika's case study of social engagement in Nicosia – but within the field, there is an overwhelming emphasis on the practice providing conflict resolution or amelioration:¹⁶ little attention has been paid to the possibilities or place of conflict in 'working with people'. This research addresses this gap and shows how conflict can provide new ethical and political understandings of the liberating possibilities of the practice. It also posits a distinctive exploration of a productively agonistic relationship *within* the institutions that fund and support participatory work. In this way, it asks fundamental questions about the intentions of institutions in engaging in this work, as well as the purpose and possibility of participation. It is, at its core, a questioning of the relationship between an institution that may support/fund participatory art projects, the artist who is employed to enact these projects, and the participating publics who 'receive' these projects. In presenting conflict as a productive and essential mechanism within the practice, the research reconfigures the expectations of participatory practices and presents new notions about the purpose and function of this type of work.

1.3 Chapter Breakdown

This thesis contains an analysis of – and reflection upon – my practice-based research exploring conflict within institutionally commissioned participatory projects. I should

¹⁶ For example, see Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1976) or International Network of Museums for Peace', www.inmp.net/aims, Undated. (Available online – Accessed 30 November 2014). This is explored in further depth in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4.

note that the disruption and the emergence of new subjectivities that can occur via conflict, however, do not happen in linear, narrative fashion. This is because 'working with people' and their place within hegemonies is neither linear nor narrative: we are complex and multiple and passionate beings for whom everything is interconnected – politics relates to identity; identity to biology; biology to culture; culture to politics and so on. These aspects of the lived experiences of participatory projects do not exist in separate, chaptered portions of life, but merge. The same is very true of the practice of participation. Therefore, whilst this thesis operates in a broadly logical fashion, following the chapter breakdown below, it is important to note that it also operates in a merged and interconnected, woven fashion. The literature and practice review therefore happens as the text develops, rather than as a separate entity, with relevant literature and practice discussed in relation to the specific thematic of the chapters. Additionally, the argument builds in a segmented fashion through the chapters, each of which explores an aspect of the practice pertinent to the research questions.

Chapter Two explores what is meant by *participatory practices*, including an analysis and reflection on the nature and definition of the genre. As mentioned above, there is little current universal agreement of what it means – and how – to 'work with people' and so this chapter provides a framework for understanding. It takes a historical view that traces the emergence of the practice and leads up to contemporary conceptualizations that include theoretical and critical underpinnings. While it could be suggested that Bruno Latour et al's Actor-Network Theory (ANT) might be a useful tool within participatory practices as it explores and defines the interaction of collective social processes,¹⁷ its focus on non-human and object-based agency falls out-with the scale of this research. ANT sees "an unnecessary duality between humans and non-humans,"¹⁸ whereas this research fundamentally explores the interrelationships of humans, both within and without institutions. As I explore in Chapter 4, it could also be suggested that how I am phrasing 'institutions' is constant with an '*actant*' within ANT, however, as my conclusion within that chapter shows, this research is framed squarely within the interrelationships of individuals of those institutions, rather than the institutions themselves, and this is another reason why I do not explore the ANT theory deeper.

ANT is, however, useful to explore in regards to power, and I look at this theory in a little more depth in Chapter 3, in which I unravel the role of institutions within participatory works. The reflection on policy and institutional intent within participatory work is vital when considering instrumentalisation of the practice and this is addressed in Chapter Three. This section draws on theories by Mouffe to present new relational formulations between artists and institutions.

Chapter Four offers an in-depth view into the concept of conflict itself and its use within participatory practices. This is a major contribution to the field, as it reconfigures participatory practices relationship to conflict in ways that have yet to be implemented. Current policies of participation, especially those that were influenced by New Labour's philosophy of Social Inclusion, attempt to create a social consensus that has little place or understanding of conflict and yet – as this thesis will show – conflict is the methodology by which the dominant hegemony can be critiqued effectively and ethically, while at the same time providing the 'potential for transformation'.

Central to my practice-led approach was the use of a physical methodology. Chapter Five contributes to a new understanding of how physicality acts as a mechanism of engagement; as a method to explore the salient issues of the institutions and

¹⁷ C. Crawford, (2005). 'Actor Network Theory'. In G. Ritzer (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of social theory*. (pp. 1-4). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

¹⁸ D. Cressman (2009) *A Brief Overview of Actor-Network Theory: Punctualization, Heterogeneous Engineering & Translation*. Vancouver: Simon Fraser University. ACT Lab/Centre for Policy Research on Science & Technology (CPROST) 2009.

communities; and as a process to introduce a 'conflictual' participatory practice that can assist in the disruption and the emergence of new subjectivities. As the physical involves an understanding of corporeal *presence*, the research was conducted through a series of residencies that allowed me to explore the research questions in different contexts *in situ*. These residencies were both national and international, and allowed me to compare and contrast both the works and the institutional approaches. This chapter also approaches ephemeral nature of this methodology and the role documentation plays. Indeed, in many ways, this text exists as the document of my research, fully explored and revealed in the following chapter.¹⁹

Chapter Six then looks at the practice-based research undertaken as part of this PhD, breaking each of these residencies into sections to explore the findings of each, and how they pertained to the thematics addressed in previous chapters. This chapter is the meat and grist of the research, weaving the theoretical and practice-led together. This is followed by the conclusion that summarises the research as well as details the significance and contribution to this practice.

There are also three appendices that illustrate further elements of my research. The first describes each work made during the research, including images and links to online documentation. Within the main text, I do not delve into every single project, and so Appendix I chronologically lists the entirety of the works undertaken within this three-year project and is guided by a 'topology of practice' which I explain at the beginning of the section. Appendix II relates to ethical approval that I sought out for these projects. As ethics are vital concern to participatory practices, ethical approval for each separate project was sought out via the Faculty Ethics Committee at Newcastle University. I have included examples of the information and consent forms, as well as a brief statement. Lastly, Appendix III explores a 'parallel storytelling' that is concerned with alternative communication tools and offers useful, alternative insights to my research, including blogging and writing. The diagrams, in particular, have been useful to provide deeper insight into the research and exist as part-drawing, part process of understanding and part-intuitive response to complicated contexts.

As practice-led research, much of the research has emerged intuitively, however, there have been also been consistent thematics that contribute uniquely to the practice. These new conceptualisations of the practice have much to offer a field of work that is, in its current form, torn between the instrumentalisation demanded by institutions and the activist-led 'political' framing of 'working with people.' In my work, rather than present a rejection of institutions or an activism-led understanding of participatory practices, the research provides new understanding about productive, agonistic relationships with institutions via conflict. It presents new understandings about the potential of participatory works to be *political*, but does so without defaulting to binary, utopian notions of 'right' and 'wrong'. Instead, it reconfigures the expectations that participatory practices *should* be concerned with amelioration, and raises questions about on what criteria such amelioration is based, and who decides that criteria. Standing in contrast to these approaches, this text reveals conflict to be a productive and ineradicable element of the social realm, and as participatory works are fundamentally concerned with that realm, far from avoiding conflict it encourages practitioners, publics and institutions to embrace all that conflict has to offer.

¹⁹ This also explains the length of this PhD text, as it contains descriptive analysis and reflection of the works, as well as written documentation.

2. Participation: Who We Are To Each Other, And Why

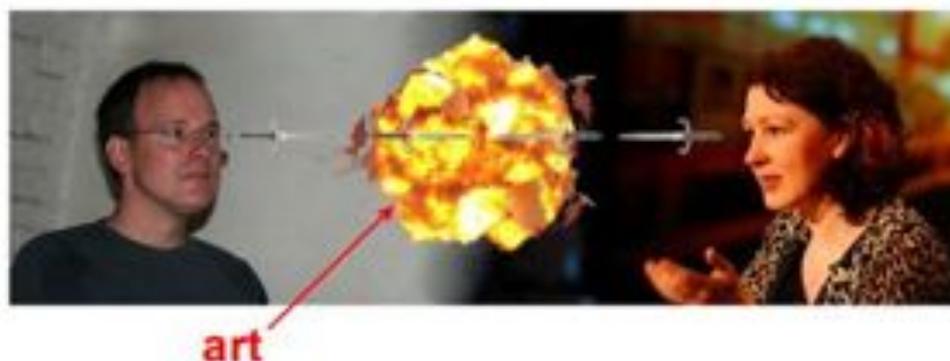


Fig 2.1 *BOOM!* Digital montage of Grant Kester and Clare Bishop, May 2013.

2.0. Introduction

Within this chapter, I discuss the contemporary frameworks of participatory practice, including current understanding of the terms ‘public’, ‘community’ and ‘social realm’ before moving on to explore the conceptual frameworks of participatory practices, from historical inception, its emergence as a ‘new genre’ to contemporary discourses. I end with a discussion on the ‘ethics’ of working with people. To begin with, I use an argument between theorists Claire Bishop and Grant Kester to act as metaphor of productive conflict.

2.1 A Metaphor of Productive Conflict

In 2006, a public spat between theorists Grant Kester and Claire Bishop emerged concerning their differing theories on participatory projects.¹ While exploring many different aspects of participatory practice, the nub of the disagreement was their differing perceptions on its purpose and intentions. Kester argued for a nuanced understanding of co-authorship, for artworks to be in service of social betterment and saw the “social power commanded by the artist as a kind of original sin, which dialogic art must guard against, embedded in the very language and practice that the artist engages in. Effectively, the artist is required to absolve this authority through a commitment to open dialogue.”² Bishop, in counterpoint, attacked the “tendency for art criticism to evaluate collaborative works in ethical rather than aesthetic terms, judging their success solely with regards to the egalitarian form of the inter-subjective relation enacted by the work, instead of evaluating it ‘as art’.”³ This public disagreement took place over the months of April, May and June in the pages of *Artforum* magazine, and also gave rise to many fora, debates, online discussions and responses to the topic,⁴ as well as more formal responses, such as their subsequent works: Bishop’s *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (2012), and Kester’s *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (2012).⁵

¹ K. Charnley. (2011) ‘Dissensus and the politics of collaborative practice’. *Art & the Public Sphere*, 1:1. pp. 37-53 p. 38

² G. Kester in K. Charnley. Ibid. pp. 37-53

³ C. Bishop in K. Charnley. Ibid. pp. 37-53

⁴ For a selected few, see, for example, ‘Metamute’, 10 May 2007, <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/zombie-nation>. (Available online – Accessed 18 December 2014) or ‘Impex’, May 2006, http://www.impex-info.org/text/texts_ibz_eng_05.html. (Available online – Accessed 18 December 2014) or ‘Incubate’, June 2011, <http://incubate-chicago.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/InCUBATE-What-do-Artists-Know.pdf>. (Available online – Accessed 18 December 2014)

⁵ C. Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London, Verso. and G. Kester. (2012) *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012.

The purpose of referencing this disagreement is to draw attention to how the debate sparked a diversity of thinking on the topic of 'art within the public realm' and, in this manner, it acts as a historical flashpoint that gives insight into the growing interest in public and participatory practices in the early 21st century. Indeed, viewing Kester and Bishop's argument as a singularity from which the inquiry and information about the field expands is a useful image for this research as it presents conflict as something productive. Their differing and sometimes opposing positions shed light onto the diversity of thought about participatory practice, and exposed the gaps in assumed shared understandings. It is this generative understanding of dissensus that guides my research and this text, which aims to explore the place of conflict within participatory practices. To do this, it is important to explore what is meant by participatory practices in a contemporary context.

2.2 Current Frameworks

As the Bishop/Kester dichotomy suggests, there were – and are – different formulations of participatory practices and I speak of these differences below, but in order to discuss the practice holistically I employ an umbrella definition drawn from Suzanne Lacy's *Mapping the Terrain* (1995) where she suggests the practice to be "visual art that uses both traditional and non-traditional media to communicate and interact with a broad and diversified audience about issues directly relevant to their lives [and] is based on engagement."⁶ This definition acts as an over-arching delineation that is descriptive of the field, but also under which different permutations can exist and operate. However, I would insist on one caveat to Lacy's definition that deletes the word 'visual' in favour of 'art' in general. This is because the work is not only visual but also employs other creative processes such as music, theatre, craft, dance, film, video, photography, digital media, performance, architecture and storytelling.⁷

Today, there are many professional structures to promote participatory practices, including the contemporary Artworks project, which seeks to "support the continuing professional development of artists working in participatory settings."⁸ There are also many awards that value this sort of work, such as the Leonore Annenberg Prize for Art and Social Change by New York's Creative Time, or Public Art Dialogue's annual award for contribution to the field of public art. In addition, the rise of journals and academic programmes such as the recently Field initiative⁹ or the Art and Social Action¹⁰ MFA programme at Queens College, NYC all contribute to a contemporary and collective formulation of the practice as something supported, valued and professionalised in ways that it had not existed previously. At the time Bishop and Kester's debate, however, the forms of participatory practices as they exist currently were still emerging, and the theory and criticism of the field was not as developed as it is now. Then, the Social Exclusion Unit – a UK government department that had incorporated art projects within the public realm to its remit (explored in greater depth in the following chapter¹¹) – had been operating for just over 9 years and is useful to mention at this stage as its instrumentalised approach had led to many different

⁶ S. Lacy (ed.) (1995). *Mapping The Terrain: New Genre Public Art*. Seattle. Bay Press. p. 22

⁷ It is important to note that at this stage, I am purposefully not describing the *intent and purpose* of such works, only their general form.

⁸ 'About Artworks'. Paul Hamlyn Website. Undated, <http://www.phf.org.uk/page.asp?id=746>. (Available online – Accessed 14 October 2014).

⁹ 'About Field Journal'. Field Website. Undated, <http://field-journal.com/>. (Available online – Accessed 12 March 2015).

¹⁰ 'Art + Social Practice'. Undated, <http://www.socialpracticequeens.org/>. (Available online – Accessed 12 March 2015).

¹¹ As I clarify in Chapter 2, the Social Exclusion Unit did not have specific funds for participatory art, but incorporated such works via adjacent budgets and instrumentalised participatory practices via its other activities.

conceptualisations of the practice, with different intentions, outcomes, and concerns.¹² Indeed, these different conceptualisations and lack of shared understanding could be seen as the very cause of Kester and Bishop's disagreement: there was no shared language, nor collective endorsement of the practice.



Fig 2.2 *The Ambassadors*. Hans Holbein, The Younger, 1553, Oil on Oak. 207 cm × 209.5 cm, National Gallery, London.

To explore the plethora of conceptualisations, it is useful to delve into the history of the practice. Theorist Declan McGonagal has argued that contemporary attempts to define what constitutes 'participatory arts' are arbitrary.¹³ For example, he suggests the visual anamorphosis in the 1553 painting *The Ambassadors* by Hans Holbein, which only viewers standing at a certain angle can see, signifies that the artist was not only aware of the viewing public's position, but also developed context specific and relational experiences with him/her, much like a current understanding of 'working with people.' Semantically, he suggests, it is also true that the painter, sculptor or producers of all 'traditional' artworks also 'work with the public' to some degree – either in the manner of the work of art's production or in its reception – so almost every artwork could be considered 'participatory' in some way.¹⁴ McGonagal's semantic framing is useful to keep in mind on one hand as it places the practice within a wider, artistic and philosophical context as well as locates practices of participation firmly within the 'art institution'. On the other hand, however, it is problematic, because, as I will explore below, the majority of these practices emerge in resistance to the 'art institution' such as the Community Art Movement, the Italian Futurists or the Dada Movement. This contradiction illuminates the on-going tension between art institutions and the general public outside in 'participatory practices'. This tension is illuminated with a further grounding of the notion of what is a 'public' and what is an 'art institution'. I begin with the former.

In the broadest sense, the 'public' can be defined as the entirety of a population. Problematically, such a homogenised framing of a mass of people implies that each individual within that population hold the same intentions and passions, and the institutions that address them speak to them all, or – at least within a democratic sphere – speaks to *most* of them. Additionally, the terminology also used within

¹² This is explored in greater depth in the following chapter, but Belfiore and Bennett (2007) offer a comprehensive view on this debate: E. Belfiore & O. Bennett, (2007) *Rethinking The Social Impacts of The Arts*. International Journal of Cultural Policy, 13:2. pp. 135 – 151.

¹³ D. McGonagle at *A Genuine Mystery: Inspiration and shared belief in collaborative art and education contexts* symposium. 13 October 2012, Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh.

¹⁴ Ibid.

participatory practices refers to 'community and' Kester delineates these two term's use within participatory practices:

'Public' and 'community' imply two very different relationships between the artist and the administrative apparatus of the city. The public artist mostly interacts with urban planners, architects, and city agencies concerned with the administration of public buildings and spaces, while the community-based public artist more commonly interacts with social service agencies and social workers (women's shelters, homeless advocates, neighbourhood groups, etc.).¹⁵

This quote reveals a dichotomy between 'public' and 'community' within participatory practices and the different situations of the artists with whom they participate. The 'community' is presented as those specified groups with shared needs (women's rights, issues of housing, definitions of 'the local') and a community artist works with these 'communities' to address these needs. The public, as suggested above, is an amassed amalgam of the population and the public artist therefore works within civic parameters to communicate with them. The ambiguity of a homogenised address suggest that, due to the plurality of differences within the public sphere, it would be difficult to develop works that can speak to all – or even *most* of them. Any work made, then, cannot truly be said to be 'public' if it cannot address the entire diversity of intentions and passions of an entire population.

Michael Warner's notion of 'Publics And Counterpublics' is helpful in unravelling this simplistic notion of artists working with the public and/or communities. Warner suggests that publics are

different from a crowd, an audience or any other group that requires co-presence. Personal identity does not itself make one part of a public. Publics differ from nations, races, professions or any other group that, though not requiring co-presence saturate identity. Belonging to a public seems to require at least minimal participation, even if it is patient or notional, rather than a permanent state of being. Merely paying attention can be enough to make you a member¹⁶

A public is a heterogeneous amalgam of many different desires, and each member of the population will each have different intentions and different passions. (This notion of 'difference' and how that plays out within society is explored in chapter three when dealing with notions of conflict.) Importantly, Warner suggests that the public as 'self-organising' – *publics* is a teleological function that emerges to be addressed, and in being addressed, it emerges. Far from being questionable, this teleological nature of the public is "not just a puzzle for analysis, but also the crucial factor in the social importance of the form."¹⁷ This is because:

A public organises itself independently of state institutions, law, formal frameworks of citizenship or pre-existing institutions such as the church. If it were not possible to think of the public as organised independently of the state or other frameworks, the public could not be sovereign with respect to the state...The way *the* public functions in the public space (as the people) is only possible because it is really a public of discourse. It is self-creating

¹⁵ G. Kester. (1995) 'Aesthetic Evangelists: Conversion and Empowerment in Contemporary Community Art' in *Afterimage* 22:6. pp. 5 -11. p. 6.

¹⁶ M. Warner (2002) 'Publics and Counter Publics' *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. 88:4 (November) pp. 413 – 425. p. 415.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 414.

and self-organised, and herein lies its power, as well as its elusive strangeness... It must be organised by something other than the state.”¹⁸

This self-organising principle is essential to both a *publics* practical definition as well as its political agency. Far from being the totality of people within a given area (or of a state), the *publics* are groups of people engaged in a shared discourse, or many shared discourses, often simultaneously.¹⁹ The self-organising principle of the a public – or many *publics* simultaneously – complicates the function of ‘public art’ and the institutions that commission it and begs the question *who is the ‘public’ of public art*: ‘publicness’ becomes complicated, because of the very diversity it implies. In the rest of the text, I use the term ‘*publics*’ in Warner’s framing as something with agency, as self-organising and made of multiple discourses.

In regards to notions of ‘community’, this can be explored by examining the plethora of entries for the term in the Oxford English Dictionary:

- 1) A group of people living *together* in one place, esp. one practicing common ownership: ‘a community of nuns’.
 - all the people living in a particular area or place: ‘local communities’.
 - a particular area or place considered *together* with its inhabitants: ‘a rural community’.
 - the people of a district or country *considered collectively*, esp. in the context of social values and responsibilities; society: ‘preparing prisoners for life back in the community’.
 - [as adj.] denoting a worker or resource designed to serve the people of a *particular area*: ‘community health services’.
- 2) [usu. with adj.] A group of people having a religion, race, profession, or other particular *characteristic in common*: ‘Rhode Island’s Japanese community | the scientific community’.
 - a body of nations or states *unified by common interests*: ‘[in names] the European Community | the African Economic Community’.
- 3) A feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of *sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals*: ‘the sense of community that organised religion can provide’.
 - [in sing.] a similarity or identity: ‘writers who shared a community of interests’.²⁰

The emphasised words and phrases above – *together, collectively, characteristic in common, unified by common interests, sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals* – all point towards a definition of community as being composed of people with shared interests, rather than the broad entirety of the ‘the public’. This term is, however, still quite malleable as it can pertain to a large collection of people (e.g. the South Asian community of the UK, or a town community) to something quite specific (e.g. the Pigeon Fancier’s community in Great Yarmouth or the Scottish Transgendered Alliance). There is a temporal aspect to the notion as well, suggesting that it can also pertain to people that come together for a period of time around a shared interest (e.g. the artist community within Scotland that came together to impeach Creative Scotland’s Director in 2012, or even those stuck together on a delayed train), but might have little or nothing to do with each other once their temporary community dissolves. As Werner suggested, communities – like *publics* – are self-organising. Semantically, what constitutes ‘community’ is then quite flexible, and can extend to any group of people with a shared discourse.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 414 (Emphasis original).

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 413 – 425.

²⁰ ‘Community.’ Oxford English Dictionary Online. (Available online – Accessed 14 December 2014) (Emphasis added).

Therefore, art that occurs within a community setting relates to a context specific group or situation, with a group of people with shared interests or experiences. It is not necessarily an experience for those people 'in need' or organised around amelioration. This is in contrast to in Kester's view, however, as he presents the 'community' as an allusion to an ameliorative approach, and suggests the community-based artist work with "social service agencies and social workers (women's shelters, homeless advocates, neighbourhood groups, etc.)"²¹ – i.e. those that deal with helping and fixing a group of people; those that require a social service or social work experience, (those that access a women's shelter, the homeless, etc.).

This phrasing of the community as something that can – and should – be 'helped' by a community artist is a particular framing of some of participatory practices, and I explore this in further detail below, along with other permutations of participatory practices, such as Bishop's. These are more recent permutations of the terms, and in my own usage within this thesis, I use the terms 'publics' and 'community' interchangeably to speak of groups of people who have the agency to temporally self-organise, rather than either a reference to an amorphous mass (the entirety of the general public) or a group in need help and amelioration. In the historical development of the practice, however, a lineage can be drawn from the development of public art institutions and the changing relationship between them and the population outside their gates.

2.3 The (Impossible) History of Participatory Arts

The first public art gallery was the Dulwich Picture Gallery, predating the National Gallery by 10 years, and opening in 1814. Its lineage is more impressive, however, being initially created by the wealthy actor Edward Alleyn in the late early 1600s as part of his College of God's Gift at Dulwich (now known as Dulwich College). The college – along with several alms-houses for the poor of Dulwich – received his bequest of art upon his death in 1626 and later the institution had a purpose-built wing, accessible by and designed for the public consumption of art by architect Sir John Soane in 1814. It is useful to note here that the first 'art institution' within the UK was premised upon charitable and educational grounds, as this model of the edifying art institution continued to develop, becoming incredibly popular in Victorian times when the institution aimed to "give citizens cultural fulfilment through the displaying of objects in order to educate them."²² Indeed, art – especially participatory art – and education are deeply enmeshed, and I will unpick these later below, but the salient notion to consider about Dulwich Picture Gallery is that it presents an institution with the financial wherewithal enacting educational and spiritual enrichment and emancipation to those of less fiscal means (i.e. the poor) via art. In other words, the general public were invited to participate with the art establishment in a specific, relational and 'enhancing' process.

Philanthropic trends in the Victorian times took up this mantle with the museum and gallery seeking to educate working-class communities in moral and spiritual development via art. Victorian institutions became "the bourgeois public sphere par excellence, a place for rational-critical thought and (self) representation of the bourgeois class and its values."²³ Participating with these bourgeois institutions was therefore a means to capitulate the hegemony of the monolithic structures of class and power,²⁴ and participating within them acted to reinforce the dominant consensus of in

²¹ G. Kester. (1995) 'Aesthetic Evangelists: Conversion and Empowerment in Contemporary Community Art' in *Afterimage* 22:6. pp. 5 – 11. p. 6.

²² D. Beel. (2012) *Reinterpreting the Museum: Social Inclusion, Citizenship and the Urban Regeneration of Glasgow*. PhD Thesis: University of Glasgow. Glasgow.

²³ S. Sheikh. (2004a) 'Public Spheres and the Functions of Progressive Art Institutions' Republic website, http://www.republicart.net/disc/institution/sheikh01_en.htm. February (Available online – Accessed 13 November 2013).

²⁴ Ibid.

the early 1900s via their educational and spiritual agendas.²⁵ It was this specific constellation of 'working with people' that Filippo Marinetti and the Italian Futurists wished to challenge in order to bring about a new conceptualisation of art:

Until that point, modern art had for the most part been restricted to the display of two- and three-dimensional work indoors: in salons, commercial galleries, and in the newly emergent form of the biennial (1895 onwards)... Marinetti was aware of the need to reach a broad audience to realise his cultural and political goals of overthrowing the ruling bourgeoisie.²⁶

Bishop argues that the Italian Futurists should be seen as the rightful ancestors to modern participatory practices that link the institutions mentioned above with the contemporary political and non-traditional media. Their interest was in theatre as something that offered "alternative space of exhibition: artists were in direct control of a display format in which audiences could be confronted directly, rather than through the meditation of an exhibition."²⁷

Marinetti and his ilk created participatory events that sought to develop new, collaborative relationships with art viewers, purposefully against the bourgeois traditions of the elitist and ruling classes. These new relationships were developed by, for example, selling the same theatre ticket to 10 different people, or leaving glue on theatre seats that stuck the visitor to the chair, thereby enraging audiences.²⁸ It must be noted that these relationships were not necessarily a mutually beneficial collaboration, but they were certainly participatory. Bishop refers to them as "combative cabarets."²⁹ Importantly, the Futurists had a political desire to reformat relational and traditional aesthetic structures via participating with a public: "Marinetti was aware of the need to reach a broad audience to realise his cultural and political goals."³⁰ This desire to challenge the institutional/public relationship is a continual trend of the practice, and is resonant with many collaborative artworks today. Bishop's *Artificial Hells*³¹ traces a well-researched lineage of similar practices and thought throughout the 20th century which gives credence to the field's complicated and diverse history, including a chronology that stems from the Futurists, through Dada, The Situationists, Fluxus, Happenings, the Community Art Movement and the Artist Placement Group (see below) as well as other non-western movements in the former Soviet Republic as well as South America. Each of these movements, she argues, sought to reformat a public's engagement with art and artistic institutions. Participation with the public was seen as a way to challenge the contextual hegemonies of the art world – be they aesthetic, political, financial or social – and provide new subjectivities via geographically shifting the position of art, or surrealist presentations, or immersive theatricality, or engaging in direct political action.

The political imperative is participation's constant bedfellow. Outside Europe, in Brazil Paulo Fiere's 1968 publication *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000)³² described a liberating pedagogical theory which was taken on by theatre practitioner Augusto Boal in his influential *Theatre of the Oppressed*,³³ originally published in 1974. Drawing from the revolutionary potential espoused in Fiere, Boal's practice attempted to engage ordinary citizens in theatrical and artistic productions to invoke participants to political

²⁵ G. Kester. (1995) 'Aesthetic Evangelists: Conversion and Empowerment in Contemporary Community Art' in *Afterimage* 22:6. pp. 5 – 11.

²⁶ C. Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London, Verso. p. 43.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 166.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 166.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 41.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 44.

³¹ Ibid. p. 45.

³² P. Freire. [1968] 2000 *Pedagogy Of The Oppressed*. New York, Continuum.

³³ A. Boal. [1974] 1993 *Theatre of the Oppressed*. New York, Theatre Communications Group.

action, aligning his theories with leftist tactics of consciousness raising and direct action. His theatrical methodologies (which included the strategies of Invisible Theatre and participatory Forum Theatre in which the participants had a direct impact on the production) placed an emphasis on the collaborative, co-authorial role that aimed to inspire participants to political action against the ruling institutions. In this regard, Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* is still held as a model for participatory practices both inside and outside of South America, and it should be noted that it is a practice that is still incredibly active with international conferences held annually, most recently the 20th Annual Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Conference, held at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (USA) in June 2014.

The radicalisation of Europe in 1960s and 1970s also saw a shift away from the monolithic art institutions towards more permeable and diffuse modes of operation, illustrated by the Artist Placement Group (APG), who wished to “rethink the role of the artist's place in society...in which the artist undertakes a placement with a company or government body.”³⁴ Due to their practice being complexly tied to the notion of the institution, I go into greater depth about APG in the following chapter. However, it is important to mention here due to their contribution to the practice of ‘working with people’. APG was formulated by artists John Latham and Barbara Steveni, but also included other artists such as Ian Breakwell and Stuart Brisley working in institutions such as the British Steel Corporation, British Airways, The National Coal Board, Hille Furniture Company, among many others. While not strictly a movement like the Futurists or Dada, APG's work attempted to reconfigure the dominant hegemony in a manner particularly relevant to this thesis in that they were interested in how an artist could develop productive relationships with institutions. The APG's impetus was premised on the idea that “art has a useful contribution to make to the world... To this end Steveni and Latham organised placements or residencies in a range of private corporations and public bodies.”³⁵ Unlike the Victorian project that aimed to pull the audience into the museum, APG “operated on the inverse principle of pushing the artist out into society,”³⁶ participating with corporate and civic structures and providing critical and reflective insight to the organisations with whom they worked.³⁷

Concurrently, within the UK, the Community Arts Movement (CAM) of the 1960s was gaining traction. It operated under a different intention to that of the APG and rather than focus on the specific location of art and artistic practices, it sought to give “attention to the marginalised, whom they sought to empower... through an opposition to elitist cultural hierarchies.”³⁸ In other words, whereas APG placed its emphasis within the criteria of ‘art’, the CAM aligned itself to the social, to community activism, and against the elitist cultural hierarchies. Its emergence grew from a desire to “democratise and facilitate lay creativity, and to increase accessibility to the arts for less privileged audiences.”³⁹

As Bishop notes, academic research on CAM “is scanty: the bulk of publications on community arts tend to comprise reports and evaluations of specific projects rather than a synthesised narrative.”⁴⁰ This lack of research means it is difficult to unpick CAM's successes or failures on aesthetic grounds, or indeed even as a political, grass-roots movement. However, it acts as a balance to the processes of APG in examining the relationship between artists and society. This new way of working was difficult for

³⁴ C. Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London, Verso. p. 165.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 166.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 166 (Emphasis original).

³⁷ B. Steveni, in conversation with author, 6 February 2014a. Peckham, London.

³⁸ C. Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London, Verso. p. 177.

³⁹ Ibid. p. 163.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 163.

the Arts Council of the UK to support or even to understand and in 1974, a committee met to define this new practice, reporting that CAM artists

differ from practisers of the more established arts in that they are chiefly concerned with a process rather than a finished product; a many-sided process including craft, sport, etc., in which the 'artistic' element is variable and often not clearly distinguishable from the rest.⁴¹

The criteria of success for the CAM then did not lie in the aesthetic realm nor in any specific permutation, but rather in *participating* in the process. It included activities such as street theatre, play-groups, amateur dramatics societies, community picnics, puppetry, social games, cookery, and craft workshops, to name but a few examples. Additionally, "in the community arts movement the goal was not an increased access to the arts, but meaningful participation in democracy through the arts."⁴² Seeking to use this participatory practice for political ends, both CAM and the APG therefore countered the White Cube monolith of the art world of the time in that they focused on people and processes, rather than the production of elitist objects. Additionally, they did so with different intentions: CAM's leaned towards activism and a criticality of politics, whereas APG was interested in reflection and criticality of aesthetics/art. In the former, it was overtly leftist, while in the latter (while undeniably leftist) the emphasis was on criticality. It is important to highlight these different intentions that begin to emerge at this time as these also parallel the differences within Bishop and Kester's arguments.

That the Arts Council had to convene a special meeting to define and discuss the various participatory practices in the 1970s speaks of a lack of shared critical discourse and understanding of the practice at the time. There were few major texts that theorised this sort of work, and one of the first major work was Su Braden's *Artists and People* (1978)⁴³ which was a case-study led comparison of artist-led and institution-supported projects in the public realm. Braden broadly critiqued the instrumentalisation of art by organisations such as the Arts Council who 'placed' artists in a social context, and argued against 'parachuting in' an artist into a context temporarily without the funds for continued relationships to develop. Six years later, Owen Kelly's *Community, Art and the State: Storming the Citadels* (1984)⁴⁴ bemoaned the de-politicisation of the Community Art Movement through state funding and argued for a revitalisation of political modalities when working with people. Both these texts drew from – and examined – the democratisation of culture and the place of artists within communities as a transformative agent.

In the 1990s there was a broader move towards participatory practices that were separate from the process-based Community Art and more reflective of aesthetic principles and/or an 'artistic' tradition'. Suzanne Lacy's *Mapping The Terrain* (1994)⁴⁵ and Nicholas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* (1998)⁴⁶ operated as the major theoretical models. Bourriaud speaks of "a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context."⁴⁷ However, whereas Community Art featured artists entering into – and deferring to – publics, Relational Aesthetics aimed to draw publics into the artistic

⁴¹ 'Community Arts: The Report of the Community Arts Working Party'. Arts Council UK. June 1974, p. 8.

⁴² S. Hope. (2012) *Participating in the 'Wrong' Way? Practice Based Research into Cultural Democracy and the Commissioning of Art to Effect Social Change*. PhD Thesis. University of London. London. p. 20. (Emphasis original).

⁴³ S. Braden. (1978) *Artists And People*. London. Kegan Paul Books.

⁴⁴ O Kelly. (1984) *Community, Art and the State: Storming the Citadels*. London. Comedia Publishing Group in association with Marion Boyars.

⁴⁵ S. Lacy. (ed.) (1995) *Mapping The Terrain: New Genre Public Art*. Seattle. Bay Press. 1995.

⁴⁶ N. Bourriaud. (1998) *Relational Aesthetics*. Paris, Les Presse Du Reel.

⁴⁷ N. Bourriaud. (1998) *Relational Aesthetics*. Paris, Les Presse Du Reel. p. 14.

context without an analysis of the effect or quality of that reconfigured relationship.⁴⁸ Instead Bourriaud focused on the aesthetic experience more than the dialogic or transformative aspects of it, as Bourriaud suggests: “Art is a state of encounter.”⁴⁹

An example of this could be Rirkrit Tiravanija’s food projects, which featured social events based around eating curries, drawing people into monolithic art institutions, such as the Venice Biennale, (Aperto 93, 1993), the Carnegie Art Museum (*Untitled (Free/Still)*, 1995) or MoMA (*Untitled (He Promised)* 2002). These works invited members of the public to partake of curries presented by volunteers and professionals within the context of the museum and/or galleries. In so doing he placed the aesthetic experience within traditional artistic frames, but did not question or challenge these structures. Dean Kenning has criticised Bourriaud’s approach for both denying the political agency of working with people and the colonisation of the public space by the art gallery/museum complex.⁵⁰

Lacy’s text emerged out of conferences, seminars and discussions about the field of practice in North America with other practitioners working in similar ways. It proved to be formative in coining the term ‘new genre public art’⁵¹ to describe the collection of artworks that was developing in the early-to-mid-90s that stood apart from the Community Arts context. This new genre public art term came to signify the ephemeral, responsive, political, socially-based, aesthetic and collaborative practices that began to resemble the contemporary participatory artworks today, especially within North America.⁵² However, I am not suggesting Lacy’s work and methodology should be considered a model for *all* participatory practices, only that her formulation is a useful locus of the practice, as it captures a moment where participatory practice becomes recognisable as a unique way of making art. It stopped being different strands of ways of ‘working with people’ and named as its own thing in the world. It should be noted, however, that Lacy’s conceptualisation of the intentions of this work is problematic as she advocated that the work should affect policy, as well as incorporating this way of working into policy-making,⁵³ thereby complicating its intentions.⁵⁴ It became instrumentalised as a tool for social betterment, pushing the work into rougher ethical waters: once policymakers could employ this practice to enact ‘betterment’, it complicates notions of who is ‘better’ and who has the authority to make others ‘better.’

The complications that occur when the practice is elided with cultural policy (and the institutions who make those policies) is explored further in the third chapter below, but it is useful to note here that the development and growth of such practices was impacted and formed by its relationship with policy and funding institutions, and therefore, the practice emerges in different forms depending on unique socio-political and geographical contexts. The theoretical frameworks and practices of participatory practices explored here are squarely based in Western-centric vision, but it is vital to note that the forms of contemporary participatory practices take within the West/Global North vary from its form in Southern, Eastern or non-geographically centred locations.⁵⁵

⁴⁸ C. Bishop. (2004) ‘Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics’ in *October*, Volume 110 (Autumn). Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

⁴⁹ N. Bourriaud. (1998) *Relational Aesthetics*. Paris, Les Presse Du Reel. p. 18.

⁵⁰ D. Kenning. (2009) ‘Art Relations and the Presence of Absence.’ *Third Text*, 23:4 (July) pp. 435 – 446 (Available online – Accessed 27 October 2014).

⁵¹ S. Lacy. (ed.) (1995) *Mapping The Terrain: New Genre Public Art*. Seattle. Bay Press.

⁵² C. Cartiere & S Willis. (eds) (2008) *The Practice of Public Art*. Oxford, Routledge.

⁵³ See, for example, her *Three Weeks In May* (1977), the *Oaklands Project* (1991 – 2001) and *Storying Rape* (2012).

⁵⁴ See for example Anne Douglas and Suzanne Lacy. (2010) ‘Working in Public: Art, Practice, and Policy’ seminars and workshop at the Scottish Parliament 2006-2007.’ <http://archive.publicartscotland.com/reflections/39/> (Available online – Accessed 14 March, 2015).

⁵⁵ See, for example, Barnes, H. and Coetzee, M. (2014) *Applied Drama: Theatre As Social Intervention in Conflict and Post-Conflict Contexts* Johannesburg: University of Witswatersrand Press. See also, C. Bishop (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London, Verso, Chapter 7: Former West.

While it is not the place of this text to delineate these differences, it is important to recognise them and not assume a colonial stance that this is *the* history of participation, only that it is a subjective history that emerges from the Western influences that have formed my own practice. It is also useful to allude to the global diversity of practices within the field here as complicates a singular, universal notion of what is meant by 'participatory art,' and in that calls for a deeper inquiry to the grist and details of contemporary participatory practices. It is this inquiry to which this thesis hopes to contribute.

Indeed, considering the sheer diversity of permutations, it would be impossible to present a codex of the practice, rather, the salient point is that the different formulations of participatory practice each operate under different non-positivist and multiple rules of engagement, depending on the history from which it emerges. To speak about the practice as a whole, I use the umbrella notion of 'working with people' as this can be the only criterion by which to delineate the edges of 'participatory practice' because it is the only touchstone amongst the plethora. Additionally, the academic theorisation of the practice is only 40 years old, so it is important to recognise that the specific constellation of 'working with people' is still forming within the pantheon of art. Lacy herself stated that "The term new genre public art...was not meant to identify a form of art so much as to pose a challenge to a discourse developing around public art during the 1980s."⁵⁶ This suggests that, much like the context-led necessity when 'working with people', the practice itself can only be spoken about context-specifically, and the context from which I draw my understanding stems from the theoretical and philosophical framework of both Grant Kester and Claire Bishop, whose own frameworks were inspired by pre-existing art historical or philosophical models that justified their positions.

Grant Kester selects his lineage from the art historical cannon in order to justify the practice 'as art' but also to affirm an alignment with the political imperative of participatory practice. To explain the emergence of the practice, he calls forth the modernist painting tradition, specifically Michael Fried's assessment that an "authentic work of art is one that make us forget all the contingent factors that produce an authoritative aesthetic experience."⁵⁷ In other words, he suggests that the best artworks are those works that deny a single authoritative voice, but rather expand the concept of 'authorship' to include a reference to something communal. For Kester, sole authorship is the 'original sin' of participatory practices, and so the evocation of a work of art in which that formulation of authorship is made seamless both acts to delineate authorship as a valid topic of inquiry but also is a justification of the political imperative of co-authorship that emerge from post-modernist traditions. The resistance to modernist work is complicated by his assessment of the spatial understandings that came from Abstraction which challenge the physical relationship between an art object and the viewer, and called on a new, relational situation similar to the practices of participation: one in which there is a more egalitarian relationship between the 'art' and the 'viewer.' He proposes Fried's framing of modernist artworks (specifically paintings) are "stoically self-sufficient and independent of the viewer, like a Buckingham Palace guard who refuses to interact with curious onlookers."⁵⁸ In contrast, dialogical works, while calling authorial relationship into question, also depends on the mutual interaction between the aesthetic experience as well as the participant.

He also refers to the modernist writings of Greenberg who, whilst speaking of visual aesthetics, still frames the artistic experience as

⁵⁶ S. Lacy. (2008) 'Time in Place: New Genre Public Art a Decade Later' in C. Cartiere & S Willis. (eds) *The Practice of Public Art*. Oxford, Routledge. p. 18.

⁵⁷ G. Kester. (2004) *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press. 2004. p. 58.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p. 48.

...a more or less open space within contemporary culture: a space in which certain questions can be asked, certain critical analyses articulated, that would not be accepted or tolerated elsewhere... [including] a critical time sense...a form of spatial rather than temporal imagination ...[and] a concern with achieving these durational and spatial insights through dialogical and collaborative encounters with others.⁵⁹

The idea of art being the “space in which certain questions can be asked” is vital to Kester’s dialogic art. To back up his arguments, Kester draws on examples of practice such as Stephan Willats, Lorraine Leeson, Littoral, Wochenklauser, Temporary Services, Ala Plastica, and Adrienne Piper to describe his constellation of the practice. From these examples and theories, he develops a theoretical model – Dialogical Aesthetics – which frames the practice as collaborative and based in the co-authored space, premised on process and mutual exchange. This aligns with my own aesthetic understanding of participatory practices. However, whereas Kester argues that the political imperative of this collaborative and co-authored space compels the practice to enact social betterment and amelioration, I would disagree and align myself with Bishop on matters of ‘betterment’ and ‘amelioration.’

Bishop resists notions of amelioration on the grounds that it is framed in terms of consensus. Instead, she references Rancière’s understanding of aesthetics as a productive zone of contradiction that operates because of dissensus. I will expand on Rancière contribution to the practice below in terms of ethics, but Bishop’s salient point is that enacting political or ameliorative approaches within participatory projects is flawed as it defers the practice to out-dated humanist notions “in which an ethics of interpersonal interaction comes to prevail over a politics of social justice.”⁶⁰ In this, she concedes that this “is not to say that ethics are unimportant in a work of art, nor irrelevant to politics,”⁶¹ only that it is vital to be clear which ethics are being espoused and what hegemonies they support. She explains her own aesthetic framework from Rancière’s notion of the political as being “a redistribution of the sensible world, rather than in an identifiable (and activist) political position”.⁶² This emerges from her understanding of art as something that is successful because it evokes dissensus, rather than operating as a lesser form of social work, which – for its own part – moves towards a humanist consensus. She calls on the practices of The Italian Futurists, Dada, Jaques Lebel, Fluxus, Graciela Carnevale, Artur Zmejowski, Thomas Hirschhorn, Jeremy Deller and Christoph Schlingenseif to secure her own specific formulation of the practice. However, she is less concerned with providing an art historical lineage of the practice, but rather of an ethical and political lineage, and from that places participatory practices squarely within the realm of the aesthetic – i.e. the dissensual.

The context, therefore, from which I draw my own practice of participatory art elides the different histories and approaches of the two theorists above into a single understanding. I borrow from Kester’s presentation of the importance of co-authorship, process-based practices and collaboration and elide these with Bishop’s understanding of ethics and purpose of aesthetics to form a conflictual manifestation of a dialogic approach. This forms the basis of my own practice, especially in works commissioned/supported/funded by institutions.

2.4 The Words We Use

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 68.

⁶⁰ C. Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London, Verso. 2012. p. 25

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 26.

⁶² C. Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London, Verso. p. 161

The diversity of terminology about the practice used contemporaneously complicates how it is defined and spoken about. 'New genre public art' is no longer a universally accepted term for the practice and various other terminologies have been deployed, including: Socially Engaged Art, Community Arts, Participatory Practices, Social Practice, Activism Art, Public Realm Artworks, Public Engagement, Collaborative Practices, shared workings, and Context-led Public Art. These terms are often used interchangeably by those within the field, despite each emerging from different contexts with different intents, and while there are variations and additional verbs to clarify meanings (i.e. community-based vs. community-engaged: one signifying a locational practice and the other signifying an engagement with an external body) broadly, the six main terms I see in use within a contemporary Global North/Western context are: Community Arts, Activism, Socially Engaged Practices, Dialogic, Relational and Public Art. While teleological, the term 'participatory practices' – much like the phrase 'working with people' – acts as an over-arching definition that frames the practice as a whole, in the same way that 'painting' incorporates the many different types of painting. The terms can be defined as follows:

- 1) Community Arts: Stemming from the Community Arts Movement described above, this 'older' form of a participatory practice came to the fore in the 1970s and '80s as a practice rooted in the artist working in collaboration with communities, which were usually those perceived as being in a disadvantaged state (poverty, substance abuse, etc.) and whom artists "sought to empower through participatory creative practice."⁶³ It often resulted in community-based and community-constructed objects – i.e. community murals/mosaics similar to the work developed by David Harding during his time as the Town Artist (1968–1978) in Glenrothes.⁶⁴
- 2) Socially Engaged Practice (SEP): SEP is in line with notions of 'social betterment', like Community Arts, but is also concerned with the systems that sustain community oppression. However, it is less concerned with direct political action (like Activist Art below) and more with a commitment to social change and development via consciousness-raising. It often, though not necessarily, results in public events authored by the artist, in collaboration with participants. An example of this is Jardín Botánico de Culiacán's *Palas por Pistolas* (2007) in which the artist collected guns from a community and then melted them into steel to fabricate shovels that he then used to dig holes in order to plant trees.⁶⁵
- 3) Activist Art: this practice is strongly aligned with leftist politics and dedicated to the emancipation of participants and the liberation of the society via a critique of oppressive (capitalist and neo-liberal) regimes, with a primary concern being direct intervention into power structures. It is primarily event-based, although it can assume other means, such as posters, graffiti, publications, etc.. An example of this would be The Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army who merge clowning with civil disobedience to enact non-violent direct action in situations of protest.⁶⁶

⁶³ Ibid. p. 177.

⁶⁴ D. Harding (n.d.) 'The Town Artist'. Undated, David Harding Website: www.davidharding.net/townartist, (Available online – 16 October 2014).

⁶⁵ 'Palas Por Pistolas'. (n.d.) <http://pedroreyes.net/palasporpistolas.php>, (Available online – Accessed 16 October 2014).

⁶⁶ 'Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army'. (n.d.) <http://beautifultrouble.org/case/clandestine-insurgent-rebel-clown-army/> (Available online – Accessed 11 December 2014)

- 4) Dialogic: described above and associated with Grant Kester, this way of working is fundamentally concerned with artworks framed as conversation and exchange, configuring the public not as an 'audience' but rather as a collaborator. It aims to avoid the paternalism which might be engendered via an 'outsider' working within a community that is not his/her own and demands the power structures to be more egalitarian between the artist and the participant, where both can be influenced by the other. It often results in a plethora of outputs, both gallery-based and public. The work of Oda Projesi is a good example of this work where three artists have been collaborating with neighbours in an area of Istanbul developing workshops, drawing sessions, discussion groups, community picnics, parades and other community events as way to provide space for dialogue and discussion on topics that were important to their lives, including community politics.⁶⁷ This approach can be often seen to be similar to Community Art, however it differs in the relationship it has to the 'art institution: whereas CAM was purposefully sited outside the art world, Dialogical works have a more blurred relationship to contemporary art. For example: Oda Projesi hired a room to exhibit artworks in a traditional gallery format, and exhibits the documents of their time with their Neighbours in other galleries and art contexts out with of that neighbourhood.⁶⁸ In other words, unlike CAM there is not an intentional break from the traditional art institution, and dialogical artists are "interdisciplinary. It operates 'between' discourses (art and activism, for example) and between institutions (the gallery and the community center or the housing block)."⁶⁹
- 5) Relational Aesthetics: a practice described by Nicolas Bourriaud that is based within the (conceptual/physical) structures of art institutions and sought new, more social ways of engaging with publics other than with traditional object-base works. They are primarily structural and/or events-based artworks, and occur primarily within institutional frameworks – i.e. gallery constructs and biennials. An example of this would be Liam Gillick's designed environments staged in galleries that encourage and frame a variety of social relationships.⁷⁰
- 6) Public Art: these are works that are funded or approved by public bodies, such a Local Authorities and (while not exclusively) they are more-often-than-not sculptural or semi-permanent. They primarily iterate a public concern and/or interest and often result in objects placed in the public sphere. An example of this would be Antony Gormley's *Angel of the North* (1998).⁷¹

A key aspect in understanding and differentiating these practices is intent, and the diagram below illustrates this by placing the above terms into one of 3 'domains'. By domain, I mean that which gives the work its meaning; the lens through which the work's presence in this world is focused. As above, this does not constitute a binding or rigid structure, but how I am defining the practice.

⁶⁷ 'Oda Projesi' 2007. Oda Projesi Website, <http://odaprojesi.blogspot.co.uk/>. (Available online – Accessed 11 December 2014).

⁶⁸ 'Installation Art'. (2006) <http://www.installationart.net/Chapter6Conclusion/conclusion04.html>. (Available online – Accessed 14 March 2015).

⁶⁹ G. Kester. (2000) 'Dialogical Aesthetics: A Critical Framework For Littoral Art' *Variant Magazine*. Glasgow. Variant, Issue 9. Special Supplement.

⁷⁰ 'Liam Gillick' (n.d.) Tate Website, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/liam-gillick-2592>. (Available online – Accessed 18 May, 2015).

⁷¹ 'Angel Of The North' 2015, Gateshead Government Website, <http://www.gateshead.gov.uk/Leisure%20and%20Culture/attractions/Angel/Home.aspx>. (Available online – Accessed 11 December 2014)

Within the diagram, the definitions are clustered into pairs, each pair sitting into one of three spheres: Institutional, Politics or Social Practice. Within the Institutional sphere, the working processes – Relational and Public Art – defer to the institutions of power that define the work’s intention: Public Art is funded and ordained by public bodies and Relational works are concerned with new types of (public) relationships within art galleries/museums. Both default to the power of the authority that funds/organises them, and therefore the intent of their work is to recapitulate and reinforce that power, either of the public institution (i.e. local government) or to the institution of art (museum/gallery).



Fig 2.3 Interacting Spheres of Participation, Venn Diagram, 2014.

The Social Practice sphere illustrates that both Socially Engaged Art and Community Art defer to the community and their needs and desires. While it would not be in the scope of this text to explore the breadth or nuances of these two practices, it is important to note that their commitment is to the social rather than to the dominant hegemony or criticality. This does not suggest the works cannot be critical of the social sphere, only that the tendency of the works is to sustain a status quo rather than destabilize the social realm. Consider David Harding’s Town Artist project in which he was committed to “involve the people of the town in making their own contribution to their own physical and cultural environment”⁷² - i.e., the townsfolk were engaged in constructing a vision of their society, rather than a focus on unraveling what already existed.

The Politics sphere defers to a notion of ‘social betterment’ via Activist art and Dialogic artworks. The intent within them is to critique the politics that sustain oppression via either direct action (activism) or exploring a mutual line of inquiry between artists and participants that initiate a transformation for those engaged (Dialogic). While not wholly replicating Grant Kester’s Dialogical Aesthetics, Dialogic artworks are similar to this way of working in that that they aim to find a consensual meeting point that can transform society, “to catalyse emancipatory insights through dialogue.”⁷³

There are two last clarifying spheres of intent that will be discussed in depth later, but are useful to introduce here as part of a framework of understanding. These two spheres cannot be represented individually as they each overlap the entire diagram and are both the substrate on which the existing circles of intent are placed and can be

⁷² D. Harding. ‘The Town Artist’. (n.d.) David Harding website, <http://www.davidharding.net/townartist>. (Available online – Accessed 16 October, 2014)

⁷³ G. Kester. (2004) *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press. p. 69. (Emphasis added).

present (and/or absent) in all spheres: these circles represent Education and Participation. This discussion is expanded in the next chapter.

This descriptive graphic then frames my (Western and European) understanding of the history and terms of participatory practices that are used within this text.

2.5 The Ethical Pirouette (or: The Stone Thrower)

When speaking of participatory practices, Bishop and Kester both refer to the work as 'social'; Bourriaud suggests it pertained to the "whole of human relations and their social context,"⁷⁴ and Lacy argues for it to "communicate and interact with a broad and diversified audience"⁷⁵ as well as being "based on engagement."⁷⁶ These descriptors of the practice are primarily those of social relationships and the main question of my research is '*How can conflict be productive within participatory art projects?*' Conflict in the context of 'working with people' however implies an ethical navigation between different agents/agent groups, and so it is important to unravel the ethical considerations of making art with/in the public realm. This is especially true when institutions (such as a Local Authority, galleries/museums or private organisations) employ an artist to 'work with people' as this service exchange begins to problematize ethical relationships between the artist, the institution and 'the public'. This is because institutions have access to – and can mobilise – more/different resources (financial, cultural, practical, etc.) than members of the public and/or artists, and therefore have access to different kinds of powers within those relationships. While this is explored in greater depth in the following chapter, it is important to highlight here as it links with the rest of this section that explores the ethical role of the artists within participatory projects.

During an experience in higher education training that I undertook as part of this PhD, a course entitled 'An Introduction to Learning and Teaching in Higher Education,' participants were introduced to some metaphors on the teacher/student relationship, for example:

- Carer to the vulnerable
- Salesperson to potential buyer
- Law enforcer to the potentially criminal
- Guru to followers
- Preacher to sceptics
- Sheepdog to sheep
- Website to surfers
- Gardner to plants
- Tour guide to tourists.

The list was not exhaustive, the lecturer explained, but was instead a provocation into how we conceptualised the student/teacher relationship, and what we felt it ought to be. In this provocation, I recognised that these relationships were also metaphors of how participatory practitioners could work with their 'public'. For example, consider the different formulations of relationships between the artist who collaborates with a single group for many years and presents them as co-authors (i.e. Pawel Althammer and the Nowolipie Group), or the activist artist who conceptualises the public as needing to be guided in a new understanding of the importance of waste management and valuing blue-collar labour (i.e. Mierle Ukeles); or consider Tim Rollins and K.O.S, where Rollins used collaborative art to nurture young vulnerable kids away from the streets and into productive, scholastic work; or the conceptual artist that employs and pays a public to share their stories (i.e. Tino Seghal). Each of these projects imply a different set of

⁷⁴ N. Bourriaud. (1998) *Relational Aesthetics*. Paris, Les Presse Du Reel. p. 14.

⁷⁵ S. Lacy. (ed.) (1995) *Mapping The Terrain: New Genre Public Art*. Seattle. Bay Press. p. 22.

⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 22.

relationships between artist and participant – the artist as collaborator, as educator, as social worker, or as employer; and the participants as co-authors, as uninformed student, as ‘in need of help’, or as materials. Of course, in each of these diverse manifestations of collaboration, I would not like to suggest that there is a ‘right’ way to have such relationships nor is there a ‘right’ way to present and represent such works: as Rancière suggests “The problem is not to know whether one can or cannot represent, but to know what one wants to represent and what mode of representation one must choose for this aim.”⁷⁷ Rather, the issue becomes about what sorts of ethical formulations the artist chooses in work with those publics, and why.

The Kester/Bishop split also occurs along conceptions of authorial relationships, with Kester conceiving of the ethical relationship via notions of ‘social betterment’ and suggesting that the artist has taken a similar role to that of a social worker:

Both the community artist and the social worker possess a set of skills (bureaucratic, diagnostic, aesthetic/expressive, and so forth) and have access to public and private funding (through grants writing, official status, and institutional sponsorship) with the goal of bringing about some transformation in the condition of individuals who are presumed to be in need.⁷⁸

Problematically, however, to collapse the field of social work and art into one denigrates both. Social work requires specialised training, regular funding, inter-agency co-operation, both physical and conceptual structures, systems of support and guiding policy/theory in order for it to achieve its goal. It is a formal and professional practice, with ‘correct’ ways of working that can be measured and evaluated. In contrast, an artist is a single individual (or collective) usually without social-work training or institutional support or regular employment within a structured system, neither can he/she be said to possess a cohesive identity that defines him/her, nor can his/her work ever be measured in a universal way. On a practical level, therefore, it would be highly problematic to assume the artist could effectively conduct the business of social work without the necessary practical structures surrounding him/her. It disavows the unique specialisms in each – art’s ability to ask probing questions and social work’s ability to be wholly committed to social betterment. This does not suggest that the separate worlds can never collide and collaborate, only that to collapse them would be problematic in practice.

The secondary – and more pressing – concern of this collapsing is an analysis of the ethical framework in which art projects that aim to ‘help’ others are premised. Ameliorative approaches can be based upon colonial notions of preconceived disparity: i.e. that the ‘helper’ is a fully-formed citizen and that the people with whom they are working are flawed and require ‘help’. This places the responsibility of change on the individual, thereby ignoring the societal structural forces that placed the person ‘in need.’ Kester concedes that this approach “conceives of the viewer as an inherently flawed subject whose perceptual apparatus requires correction”⁷⁹ and while he is critical of this “orthopaedic approach,”⁸⁰ he still suggests those working within the public realm have an ameliorative, political role within society, fighting against a capitalist, neoliberal and right-wing oppression, in order to build a better, more egalitarian (ethical) society.⁸¹

⁷⁷ J. Rancière. (2004) ‘The Ethical Turn of Aesthetics and Politics’ in J. Rancière. *Malaise dans L’Esthétique*. (Trans: J-P Deranty). Paris, Galilee. p. 13.

⁷⁸ G. Kester. (1995) ‘Aesthetic Evangelists: Conversion and Empowerment in Contemporary Community Art’ in *Afterimage* 22:6. pp. 5 – 11. p. 11.

⁷⁹ G. Kester. (2004) *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press. p. 88.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid. and G. Kester (ed.) (1998) *Art, Activism, and Oppositionality: Essays from Afterimage*. Durham, NC. Duke University Press.

This leftist utopia that he argues for, however, is this very community of consensus that both Bishop and Rancière argue against. In *The Ethical Turn* (2004)⁸² Rancière describes the growth, since the Second World War, of an 'ethical' imperative that elides 'rights' and 'facts' (or laws), creating an authoritative stance of 'community' that promotes an oppressive consensus where the realm of difference does not exist. Under this new 'ethical' regime, an order where "[a]ll differences are erased in the law of a global situation...[and] leaves no room for political dissension,"⁸³ new forms of dictatorial and oppressive forces exist under the authority of consensus. Instead of developing a utopian egalitarian world, it in fact denies difference, denies opposition and denies alternative, new subjectivities, all of which are hallmarks of a productive political community: "The political community thus tends to be transformed into an ethical community, the community of only one single people in which everyone is supposed to be counted."⁸⁴

In terms of aesthetics, Bishop paraphrases Rancière and suggests "the ethical turn does not, strictly speaking, denote the submission of art and politics to moral judgment, but rather the collapse of artistic and political dissensus in new forms of consensual order."⁸⁵ As with the political sphere, the deferral to an ethical order denies the possibility of thinking differently. Bishop's argument is that the true ethical imperative of participatory practices is for it to be art, as the aesthetic realm is "a sphere both at one remove from politics and yet always already political because it contains the promise of a better world."⁸⁶ In other words, the 'promise of a better world' is possible – and ethically possible – if participatory practices are understood as art, rather than a lesser form of social work or of a means to create a consensual community order as described in Rancière's *The Ethical Turn*. This is because the ameliorative approach capitulates to the consensual, community order of the oppressive, false ethics, whereas dissensual art can provide a mechanism via which to uncover new subjectivities that might/can challenge dominant hegemonies.

In order not to replicate this oppressive, consensual order, ethical participatory projects can lean towards dissensus. The shape of that dissensus is not dependent on politics, as Kester implies, but rather the political sphere. Mouffe defines the difference between politics and the political thus:

The 'political' refers to this dimension of antagonism which can take many forms in diverse social relations. It is a dimension that can never be eradicated. 'Politics', on the other hand, refers to the ensemble of practices, discourses and institutions that seek to establish a certain order and organise human coexistence in conditions which are always potentially conflicting as they are affected by the dimension of the political.⁸⁷

Therefore, the ethics of participatory practices should not be based in singular politics (the consensual, leftist order suggested by Kester) but rather in examining the specific configuration of ethics that is being spoken about in that particular manifestation of the political. In this framing, the deference of ethical participation is not to an ethical consensual order, but elucidating the ethics of a given situation. For example, Santiago Sierra's work is *about* ethical transgression, and the crossing of those ethical boundaries is essential to the work as he is highlighting a viewer's own complicit

⁸² J. Rancière. (2004) 'The Ethical Turn of Aesthetics and Politics' in J. Rancière. *Malaise dans L'Esthétique*. (Trans: J-P Deranty). Paris, Galilee. p. 10.

⁸³ Ibid. p. 10.

⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 6.

⁸⁵ C. Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London, Verso. p. 28.

⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 29.

⁸⁷ C. Mouffe. (2013) *Agonistics: Thinking The World Politically*. London. Verso. p. 3.

relationship in an unethical framework of global capitalism. Ethics are his subject, and in such a manner, his work's transgressions reveal a new manifestation of the political that does not defer to a consensual regime of a false ethics, but rather reveal the ways in which western viewers of his projects are implicit and active within sustaining those oppressive, unethical regimes. This is obviously a different manifestation of a collaborative relationship that is based on shared authorship and dialogic exchange. It would therefore be impossible to demand a holistic, ethical framework for the entire practice of participatory artworks.

In other words, as each participatory project will suggest different ethical configurations, the imperative is not to apply a singular, overarching formulation of ethics, but to demand the examination of individual ethical frameworks of each project, as they will always be different. In the similar vein, Bishop states that her understanding of ethics "concerns a Lacanian fidelity to the singularity of each project, paying attention to its symbolic ruptures, and the ideas and affects it generates for the participants and viewers, rather than deferring to the social pressure of a pre-agreed tribunal in which a cautious, self-censoring pragmatism will always hold sway."⁸⁸ This is explicitly about the intent of how and why one is 'working with people', and the ethical pirouette of the practice is to bring to the fore new subjectivities that do not defer to a false ethical oppressive hegemonic consensus. My interest in conflict within participatory practices is therefore involves examining and challenging ethical formulations.

2.6 Conclusion

Returning to the teacher/student relational metaphors above, I suggested to the lecturer that I could not find an apt metaphor for what captured my relationship with 'a group of learners,' (nor, for that matter, an apt metaphor for my understanding of the 'role of artist') and so developed my own description: An equal amongst other equals, all with different types of knowledge. The lecturer laughed and said that in a previous session someone had also made up a new description: A stone thrower to pigeons. This person had felt that it was her job as a teacher to induce (via a challenge) a scattering of her learners in a way that would allow them to see things differently. At the time, I was drawn to the notion of the artist as Stone Thrower, but was concerned that disruptive act of (metaphorically) throwing stones at pigeons (participants) could be said to be unethical as it could be framed violently or with an intent to harm. Both Bishop and Kester have addressed issues of disruption, with Bishop critiquing Kester's aversion to disruption as it

self-censors on the basis of second-guessing how others will think and respond. The upshot is that idiosyncratic or controversial ideas are subdued and normalised in favour of a consensual behaviour upon whose irreproachable sensitivity we can all rationally agree. By contrast, I would argue that unease, discomfort or frustration – along with fear, contradiction, exhilaration and absurdity – can be crucial to any work's artistic impact.⁸⁹

For his part, Kester questioned the ethical efficacy of the avant-garde (and Bishop's commitment to it) and instead placed emphasis on the dialogic and collaborative model of exchange "operate outside the avant-garde framework of disruption"⁹⁰ on the grounds that disruption is ambiguous and collaborative exchange is explicit. In his dialogical approach, the intention is to have shared experience, and he conceives of disruption as based on unequal premise.

⁸⁸ C. Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London, Verso. p. 26.

⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 26.

⁹⁰ G. Kester. (2004) *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press. p. 25.

Kester critiques the legacy of disruptive artistic acts via the 19th Century where a “rupture provoked by the avant-garde work [was] necessary to shock viewers out of the [dehumanising regime of the assembly line] and prepare them for the nuanced and sensitive perceptions of the artists uniquely open to the natural world.”⁹¹ This ‘preparation’ was premised on hierarchical and unequal relationships between artist and receiver and therefore the desire to ‘disrupt’ is a hangover of the out-dated avant-garde tradition.⁹²

For Bishop, however, this disruptive act is essentially political, rather than oppressive. Her understanding of aesthetics includes an unravelling of politics via “unease, discomfort or frustration – along with fear, contradiction, exhilaration and absurdity.”⁹³

Aesthetics and politics therefore overlap in their concern for the distribution and sharing out of ideas, abilities and experiences to certain subjects – what Rancière calls ‘*le partage du sensible*’ [The Distribution of the Senses]. In this framework, it is not possible to conceive of an aesthetic judgement that is not at the same time a political judgement.⁹⁴

Bishop sees the aesthetic and political as linked to ethical revelation and argues that disruption can be a challenge to dominant hegemonies. The image of The Stone Thrower to Pigeons above is therefore not necessarily unethical and could, in fact, be vital in bringing to the fore new political subjectivities than my original *an equal amongst equals* conceptualisation. Additionally, being a Stone Thrower would recognise the distinction between the artist and his/her participants, and frame that artist as having agency that stems from his/her position as an artist (rather than an ameliorative worker), but also recognise that the participants have an agency to respond, resist and react – and that these are essentially political acts. Being The Stone Thrower would also not aim to replicate a consensual order, or dictate what experience *should* occur via the participatory exchange, but rather evoke a scattering and in that scattering, present the possibility of new, political formulations.

To be sure, in my conceptualisation and practice of this ethics, this dissensus must happen ‘ethically’ in the sense its aim is to challenge existing hegemonies, but to do so without the intentional and problematic oppression or hurt of others or myself.⁹⁵ It must allow each participating individual their own agency, and explore how that agency is acted out (or denied); it understands the Foucauldian notion that we all enact power⁹⁶ and it is interested in exploring in what ways that power is hindered by controlling forces of dominant hegemonies, specifically those institutions that enact/support/fund/frame participatory practices. This is explored in the next chapter.

⁹¹ Ibid. p. 27.

⁹² Ibid. p. 28.

⁹³ C. Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso. p. 26.

⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 27.

⁹⁵ To be clear, this refers to my own practice, and is not a judgement on the effectiveness, criticality or intentions of other practices, such as the aforementioned Sierra.

⁹⁶ See, for example, Foucault, M. (1982) *Power/Knowledge* New York: Pantheon.

3. Institution and Participatory Artworks: Beyond The Administered World



Fig 3.1 Detail of caryatids on St Andrew's House, Edinburgh, Digital photograph, 2013.

3.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explored the historical frameworks of participatory practices. This chapter looks at an institution's relationship to participatory art. As I explain below, it mainly focuses on state-organised institutions, but is not limited to that framing, as it looks to any institution that has resources and powers to employ an artist to 'work with people'.

It begins with a historical contextualisation of institutions working within the public sphere, both in terms of cultural management and policy, and what is meant by 'institutional intent'. I trace the lineage of publicly funded participatory art within the UK, paying keen attention to the influence the Social Exclusion Unit has had on participatory art and the debate on instrumentalisation that this has evoked. This is followed by discussion on the difference in institutions funding/supporting 'education' or 'participation' projects within the public realm, and why knowing this difference is paramount to unravel an institution's intent to 'working with people'. The penultimate section of this chapter section explores the current 'exodus' vs. 'engagement' dichotomy in working with institutions, particularly in reference to politics. The final section includes a brief discussion on 'Institutional Critique' and why I do not align my arguments with this approach.

3.1 Bodies of Governance

As the seat of governance in Scotland, St Andrew's House was originally planned as a perfunctory administrative block that would accommodate all Scottish Office departments, and was designed by in-house architects (rather bureaucratically) of the central, London-based Office of Works. In the 1920s and 1930s, however, a growing tide of nationalist fervour within Scotland upset this original plan. The Scots had been "inspired by the notion of a national independence within a wider British Empire, such as being discussed in Ireland and India... the Scots were outraged that the designer of the proposed horror would be an English Government architect."¹ As such, the British Government came up against a popular and sturdy resistance against the 'horror' of the proposed building, and this led them "to abandon the administrative block in favour

¹ C. McKean. (1987) *The Scottish Thirties – An Architectural Introduction*. Edinburgh, Scottish Academic Press. p. 34.

of the symbolism of a new headquarters for the Scottish Administration”² completed in 1939 and opened in the tense months before the start of World War Two.

Designed by Scottish architect Thomas Tait and constructed rather hastily due to the rapid turn-around required by the commission, it sits atop Calton Hill, over-looking Edinburgh. It is widely considered as one of the great modernist, inter-war buildings in Scotland. Buildings of Scotland (1984) describes its entrance as “unashamedly authoritarian”³ largely due its imposing frontispiece, on which “... rise seven vertically emphasised bays, their soaring mullions ending in six half-length figures.”⁴ These six stony and severe caryatids stand 12 foot in height, 4 men and 2 women, each anthropomorphising aspects of Scottish identity.

I cycle up Calton Hill almost every day and pass this building as I reach the top of the hill, panting and anticipating the freewheel pleasure down to the railway station. That pause at the apogee gives me a moment to consider the figures and I always stare up at their mould-covered features. Originally, there were to be four figures and they were to represent the departments over which the Scottish Office had providence: Fisheries, Agriculture, Health and Education. However, Tait argued successfully to expand the entrance for stylistic reasons, meaning two more figures would need to be added, and two more departments/symbols of Scottishness had to be decided: ‘Architecture’ and ‘Statecraft’ were chosen.

At the beginning of this research, during the tense months prior to the 2014 Scottish Referendum, I was drawn to the symbolic figures as a curious blending of governmental policy and art. Since the union of the two countries in 1603, Scotland has always maintained control over its fisheries, agriculture, health and education, and so it made sense to include these original four symbols. The decision to include ‘architecture’ as a representative of a Scottish department also seemed clear as the construction of the building was a representation of ‘constructing’ Scotland, and it was metaphorically the ‘architect’ of the country. I was, however, unaware of the meaning of the archaic word ‘Statecraft’. I had postulated to myself that ‘statecraft’ might refer to the ‘arts and crafts of a state’ and that had made the same sort of sense which the ‘architecture’ figure had done: metaphorically, a state’s craft and art builds its unique, cultural identity. Considering that, because my PhD topic operates at the convergence of culture and politics, this figure seemed to represent an excellent physical manifestation of my inquiry and was drawn to research it further.

I quickly discovered I was wrong about the definition of the word, and about the figure’s meaning. Statecraft in fact refers to “the art of managing state affairs.”⁵ It has nothing to do with ‘art’ or ‘craft’ in the sense that I had thought, rather, the figure represents the effective management of a state. However, there is still something very useful about considering the management of a state that is pertinent to my research, namely: exploring how a state manages its subjects through policy, particularly via cultural policy. My understanding of a state’s management and intentions towards its subjects is informed by Foucault’s notion of biopolitics. Biopolitics is “a form of power [that] regulates life from the inside out”⁶ wherein an authoritative body (the state) – via its policies – induces a population to self-regulate in favour of a common good.⁷ Foucault

² Ibid. p. 35.

³ J. Gifford, C. McWilliam, & D. Walker. (1984) *The Buildings of Scotland (Edinburgh)* Penguin Books (London) and National Trust for Scotland, First edition. p. 441.

⁴ Ibid. p. 441.

⁵ ‘Statecraft’, OED Online. Oxford University Press. September 2014. (Available online – Accessed 17 November 2014)

⁶ M. Schuilenburg. (2008) ‘The Dislocating Perspective of Assemblages: Another Look at the Issue of Security’ in *Social Engineering: Can Society Be Engineered In The 21st century?* J. Seijdel (ed.). Amsterdam, NAI Publishers/SKOR.

⁷ M. Foucault. [1978] (2009) *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France 1977-1978*. London, Picador.

suggests this occurs through the subtle control of the body as it experiences disciplinary institutions such as schools, hospitals, prisons, offices, and cultural institutions (i.e. art galleries and theatres) which are themselves guided by governmental policy.⁸ Foucault speaks of a state's *Gouvernementalité*⁹ as "the optimisation of all those aspects of life that promote the welfare of the population as a whole,"¹⁰ which includes "the management of relations among [citizens],"¹¹ (especially those relations in the public realm) via policy. These conceptualisations frame an understanding that a state is not necessarily concerned with how to dominate or oppress a population, but in what subtle ways policy aids in its control of its subjects. As Jeremy Ahearne suggests:

The links between culture and political power are clear to see. Any political order needs the means to maintain its symbolic legitimacy...[and] the perpetuation of this order is only possible through the successful transmission across time of that culture.... Cultural transmission, then, is a complex political operation in its own right, and will not take place without some kind of effective policy for culture. In this sense at least, cultural policies are indeed central, fundamental and substantial.¹²

As explained in the previous chapter, there are ethical ramifications embedded into participatory art projects *because* they occur in the social sphere. Combining this with the above notion that the state is concerned with the 'management of relations' of that social sphere, cultural policy – being one of the many tools of *Gouvernementalité* – therefore becomes a subject of ethical examination. In terms of this research, the examination dwells in the relationship between policy and participatory practices, specifically in the linking mechanism between the policy and public participation projects, namely: art institutions.

Historically, the public art institutions in the UK can draw a lineage to the British Museum, which was established in 1753 when King George II gave formal assent to establish the first public museum. Collated by its founder, Sir Hans Sloane, it was in effect a large 'cabinet of curiosities', displaying his collection of natural history, drawings, archaeological finds, scientific specimens, rare publications and other historical artefacts. It existed as a radically different type of institution, which was neither private, nor church-owned, nor courtly, but rather a national, public collection and it paved the way for the development of future, public institutions. The first dedicated public *art* institutions in the UK occurred in 1824 with government agreeing to fund the first national gallery as a place that housed paintings "for the enjoyment and education of all."¹³

This educational model (later to operate in other public galleries, for example, The Museum of Manufacture in 1852 (which become the South Kensington Museum and then The Victorian and Albert Museum) and The National Portrait Gallery in 1856) can be seen as an example of Foucault's *Gouvernementalité*, because, "cultural policy... privileges and legitimises some manifestations of art rather than others."¹⁴ Or, as

⁸ This notion becomes important in later chapters regarding my physicality methodology.

⁹ M. Foucault. [1978] (2009) *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978*. London, Picador.

¹⁰ M. Schuilenburg. (2008) 'The Dislocating Perspective of Assemblages: Another Look at the Issue of Security' in *Social Engineering: Can Society Be Engineered In The 21st century?* J. Seijdel (ed.). Amsterdam, NAi Publishers/SKOR.

¹¹ M. Foucault. [1978] (2009) *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978*. London, Picador.

¹² J. Ahearne. (2009) 'Cultural Policy Explicit and Implicit: a Distinction and Some Uses' in *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 15:2. pp. 141 – 153.

¹³ The National Gallery (n.d.) The First Paintings. <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/history/about-the-building/>. (Available online – Accessed 26 November 2014).

¹⁴ E. Belfiore & O. Bennett (2007) 'Rethinking The Social Impacts of The Arts' *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 13:2. pp. 135 – 151.

Carole Duncan suggests, “to control a museum means precisely to control the representations of a community and its highest values and truths.”¹⁵ In other words, a public’s conceptualisation of itself (via art) was subject to the machinations of the cultural policy via the art institution. More than merely enacting policy, however, Simon Sheikh argues that art institutions are “the in-between, the mediator, interlocutor, translator and meeting place between art production and the conception of its ‘public’.”¹⁶ Sheikh’s point is that that the institutions can do many things to/for/with its public and are not necessarily aligned along oppressive lines, but that it certainly occupies a position of dominance over both ‘art’ and its ‘public’, and in this dominance, the art institution’s relation to its public – guided by public cultural policy – is an extension of a state’s control.

The contemporary interest in a public’s relationship with art is therefore not a new concern, however, recent research has shown that interest in the relationship between cultural policy and participatory projects have become a pressing issue.¹⁷ In his 2008 essay *Critical Spaces*, theorist Malcolm Miles suggests that public art organised by cultural policy and government institutions is implemented as “a low cost means to displace factors such as economic decline and social exclusion which result from other areas of government policy,”¹⁸ and in this manner, art within the public realm acts as a mechanism that “aestheticizes, but does not alter power relations.”¹⁹ His text proposes that government institutions – or “the administered world” as he refers to them – utilise art within the public realm as an “instrument of social control,”²⁰ and artists working on such public projects can become complicit in the replication and enforcement of dominant hierarchies.²¹ His argument suggests that the relationships between those that fund public art (state institutions), those make public art (artists), and those who ‘receive’ it (the public) are premised on unequal and uneven terms and this presents a concern about the ethical nature of institutions and their intentions in the programming/commissioning of art that occurs within the public realm and/or their intentions in engaging with the public. This triadic relationship between the institution, artist and public becomes the key relationship within participatory practices.²²

3.2 ‘Cultural Policy’ Vs. ‘Institutional Intent’

Like ‘working with people’ discussed in the last chapter, notions of cultural policy are multiple and varied, but defined in its broadest terms ‘Cultural Policy’ refers to those governmental policies that relate to the arts and culture of a government’s population.

¹⁵ C. Duncan. (1998) ‘The Art Museum as Ritual,’ in D. Preziosi (ed.) (1998) *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*. Oxford: Oxford University. pp. 474 – 475.

¹⁶ Sheikh, S. (2004a) ‘Public Spheres and the Functions of Progressive Art Institutions’ Republic website http://www.republicart.net/disc/institution/sheikh01_en.htm. February (Available online – Accessed 13 November 2013).

¹⁷ E. Belfiore (2002) ‘Art as a means of alleviating social exclusion: Does it really work? A critique of instrumental cultural policies and social impact studies in the UK’ *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 8:1, pp. 91 – 106 and E. Belfiore & O. Bennett (2007) ‘Rethinking The Social Impacts of The Arts’ *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 13:2, pp. 135 – 151).

¹⁸ M. Miles. (2008) ‘Critical Spaces’ in C. Cartiere & S. Willis. (eds) *The Practice of Public Art*. Oxford, Routledge.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ He references Audre Lorde’s notion of power and dominance and argues that – via cultural policy and/or funding remits – art within in these situations is used as a “tool of master’s house” in which the master’s house metaphorically represents the governmental institution. a. lorde. ‘The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House’ in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. lorde, a (ed.) (2007) Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press. pp. 110 – 114.

²² It is important to note that I do not aim to suggest that there are not individual artists who have initiated participatory projects without an institution’s involvement, nor that there are not alternative models of engagement which do not fit the institution/artist/public trichotomy, only that the model I am suggesting is the current and dominant model and therefore exploring the intentions of institutions can reveal in what ways public art projects are perpetuating unethical relationships, and importantly, how to address this within – and via – participatory projects.

Cultural Policy “adopted by west European city governments encompassed a variety of elements, including not only the ‘pre-electronic’ performing and visual art (theatre, music, painting and sculpture) but also contemporary ‘cultural industries’ like film, video, broadcasting, advertising, electronic music, publishing, design and fashion.”²³

Initially, one of my research paths explored how cultural policy was implemented by Local Authorities, and how my practice-led research might be able to examine the relationship between those policies and participatory art projects. I was concerned how ‘cultural transmission’ was mediated by funders and supporters of participatory practices – particularly governments – and how that mediation might foster an instrumentalised approach to art in the public realm, and the ethics related to those approaches. Particularly, I was interested to examine to what extent such instrumentalisation of culture could be seen as a tool of a governmental control. For example, in Scotland, where I live and mostly work, the institution that provides the majority of funding for all professional arts related activities (on average 80% per annum²⁴) is Creative Scotland. Creative Scotland is funded by the Scottish Government, and while purports to maintain an ‘arm’s length’ distance from the governmental aims, it occupies a more complicated position in time and space. Because Scotland is “a devolved power, and arguably because of its importance in supporting a devolved nation delineate its nationhood within the boundaries of a larger state [UK] cultural policy gained greater prominence in devolved Scottish politics.”²⁵ As such, “it is perhaps more accurate to suggest that Creative Scotland is one of the many tools of governance employed by the Scottish Government to exert power over the production of culture within Scotland in order to achieve their own strategic objectives.”²⁶ According to this context, the institution of Creative Scotland is a handmaiden to the Scottish Government, and subsequently, the art supported by Creative Scotland is supported because it is in direct alignment with the Government’s strategic objectives. Cultural policy, seen in this light, is most certainly a tool of governmental control. Of course, it could also equally be said that culture departments of the state are funded with public money, and as such, are accountable to the public body that elected them and on whose behalf they are implementing policy. Therefore, the implementation of cultural policy is not a tool of governmental control, but rather the normal functioning of a democratic state.

As Foucault’s notion of *Gouvernementalité* suggests, a state’s actions are not necessarily manipulative nor oppressive, but are rather naturalised processes of control, and so whether governments are enacting policy as ‘social engineering’ or merely operating within its approved, democratic parameters is moot: the concern is *what is the outcome?* This becomes more of an imperative to examine as cultural policies begin to concern themselves with non-art audience, participation and a wider public. Chronologically, Eleonora Belfiore suggests this begins to occur after the emergences of post-modernisms that were interested in the democratisation of culture that precipitated the shift towards arts institutions funding participatory projects:

In the past, the fact that the State should contribute – through the public arts funding system – to the preservation, diffusion and promotion of ‘high quality’ culture in the name of the citizens’ welfare was considered a matter of course. Once the principle of equivalence entered the cultural debate, decisions made on the basis of excellence, quality and artistic value were not so easily justifiable. Nevertheless, in policy debates, cultural value had

²³ F. Bianchini (1993) ‘Remaking European cities: the role of cultural policies’ in F. Bianchini & M. Parkinson (eds) (1993) *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration: the West European Experience*. Manchester. Manchester University Press.

²⁴ Creative Scotland/Scottish Arts Council budget, 2009/2011.

²⁵ D. Stevenson. ‘Tartan and tantrums: critical reflections on the Creative Scotland “stooshie”’ *Cultural Trends*; 23:3. pp. 178 – 187.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

so far represented the main criterion for deciding which activities were to be supported by public subsidy (that is, by people's taxes), and which were not. The Arts Council was now faced with the task of justifying to the nation the fact that public money was spent according to the aesthetic judgements of small groups of people who could no longer claim the authority for higher artistic judgements.²⁷

Thus, she suggests, there was a tangible shift towards social and participatory models of culture particularly by local authorities in the UK, who had become one of the main 'producers' of participatory practices by the early 2000s.²⁸ It is this shift that begins to complicate the power dynamics between the state and the production of art. Indeed, Andy Hewitt suggests that under the New Labour concern for Social Inclusion, "the state has become the chief patron for visual arts in the UK"²⁹ and artists were being conceptualised as tools of the state, "contracted to work within institutional parameters by policy directives"³⁰ and as "service providers"³¹ to a welfare state.

However, my own research within other non-governmental agencies that were not directly or even wholly controlled/funded by local authorities – i.e. independent projects and galleries, or commercial organisations that also initiate, sustain and support participatory projects – revealed that there were other institutional perspectives and models to be considered, not just governmental. As such, I felt that to only examine governmental cultural policy would result in incomplete findings and would exclude other manifestations of participatory practices. In other words, I recognised that any institution that has the financial or administrative wherewithal to fund projects in public were also capable of enacting participatory projects as an "instrument of social control."³² Grant Kester comments that "the source of arts funding, whether from public agencies or from private foundations, has a considerable ideological significance"³³ because both the state or private foundations will both have different requirements, intentions, needs, outcomes, and be formatted upon different ideological lines. Similarly Claire Bishop has noted that it is not just governments that use public and participatory arts, but also businesses "as a tool for improving efficiency and workforce morale."³⁴ Both positions suggest that the public or private institutions have intentions towards a public that are implemented via participatory practices and so it would be limiting to focus my research to purely local authorities or governmental policy, even though within the UK, their support accounts for the majority of the funding and management of participatory practices.

Zygmunt Bauman's thinking expands on this notion by speaking of 'culture' in particular regards to its management:

²⁷ E. Belfiore (2002) 'Art as a means of alleviating social exclusion: Does it really work? A critique of instrumental cultural policies and social impact studies in the UK' *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 8:1. pp. 91 – 106.

²⁸ "Indeed local authorities' spending on the arts exceeded that of central government for the first time in 1988–1989, and has done so ever since. This came to mean that local authorities became important contributors to the on-going debates on cultural policy." *Ibid.* p. 100.

²⁹ A. Hewitt. (2011) 'Privatising the Public: Three rhetorics of art's public good in 'Third Way' cultural policy' in *Art & the Public Sphere*, 1:1, pp.19-36. p. 28.

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 23.

³¹ *Ibid.* p. 23.

³² M. Miles. (2008) 'Critical Spaces' in C. Cartiere & and S. Willis (eds) *The Practice of Public Art*. Oxford, Routledge.

³³ G. Kester. (1995) 'Aesthetic Evangelists: Conversion and Empowerment in Contemporary Community Art' in *Afterimage* 22:6. pp. 5 – 11

³⁴ Roche, J. (2006) 'Socially Engaged Art, Critics and Discontents: An Interview with Claire Bishop' Community Arts Network website

http://www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2006/07/socially_engage.php. (Available online – Accessed 20 November 2012).

Just like 'agriculture' is the vision of the field as seen from the perspective of the farmer, 'culture' metaphorically applied to humans was the vision of the social world as viewed through the eyes of the 'farmers of the human-growing fields' – the managers. The postulate or presumption of management was not a later addition and external intrusion: it has been from the beginning and throughout its history endemic to the concept.³⁵

He proposes culture as something that managers and administrators seek to assemble, distribute and organise via imposing norms. Simultaneously, he sees culture as the things that seek to disassemble, diffuse and disorganise management and administrative systems. In other words, he places 'culture' and 'management' in an inexorably intertwined battle where culture is seeking to break through the barriers that managers set, and managers are constantly setting new barriers for culture. "The managers-managed relationship is intrinsically agonistic; the two sides pursue two opposite purposes and are able to cohabit solely in a conflict-ridden, battle-ready mode."³⁶ Thus, he does not specifically assume an approach of 'cultural policy' but rather expands the debate to include all institutions involved in *cultural management*. In other words, any organisation that is involved with creating and managing 'culture' are part of an expanded *Gouvernementalité*.

I therefore reoriented the focus of my research to look at 'institutional intent' as opposed to 'policy' alone, allowing the research to focus on more than governmental agencies and include other institutions such as independent projects and galleries, or commercial organisations that did not have a written cultural policy *per se*. This reformatting also brings in Jeremy Ahearne's notion of Implicit Cultural Policy,³⁷ which explores the unwritten intentions of governments that occur in tandem but obliquely to Explicit Cultural Policy and includes any "effective impact on the nation's culture of its action as a whole, including educational, media, industrial, foreign policy, etc.," – i.e. not just those things that pertain to art and artistic expression – "thereby deflecting attention from other forms of policy action upon culture."³⁸ Thus, the implicit actions of an institution work together with their explicit actions to speak about how and why an institution is enacting a participatory art project. In this way, I am using 'policy' in the broadest sense of intentions and guiding principles, rather than purely a governmental operation remit. For clarity's sake, I use the words 'institutional intent' to refer to any institution's intentions and guiding principles, and the word 'policy' specifically in regards to governmental process and dictates.

I therefore collate 'institutional intent' and 'policy' into synonymous mechanisms of 'the institution' and define the 'institution' as 'a body that initiates, sustains and supports participatory practices' to be able to incorporate both governmental and non-governmental bodies into a shared frame. This incorporated definition provides a foundation from which to critically explore institutions, as well as what their intentions entail. To reiterate: I do not suggest that institutional intentions are necessarily Machiavellian nor premised conspiratorially, but rather institutions, practitioners and communities may be unaware of the complex interactions and negotiations that occur during the design, set-up and execution of a project, and might not be aware as to why and how an institution might be functioning the way they do, and the results of that particular functioning. The examination of the ethics at play within institutions that enact participatory projects is therefore vital to inquire into how they function.

This analysis and critique institutions suggests a theoretical lineage with Institutional Critique (IC) as a formula of relations between institutions and artists. It does not,

³⁵ Z. Bauman. (2004) 'Culture and Management' in *Parallax*, 10:2, pp. 63 – 72.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 66.

³⁷ J. Ahearne. (2009) 'Cultural Policy Explicit and Implicit: a Distinction and Some Uses' in *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 15:2, 141-153. p. 143.

³⁸ Ibid.

however, align itself to the 'genre' as it proposes a more subtle relationship drawn from Chantal Mouffe's notions of agonism, based upon a committed but combative relationship, rather than a purely antagonistic critique. I explore this in the final section of this chapter, below.

3.3 Implicitly and Explicitly Billy Elliot (The Dance of Art and Governance)

In the *International Journal of Cultural Policy* (2012), Jeremy Ahearne suggested that the definition and description of Cultural Policy should be expanded to include two distinct aspects: that of Explicit Cultural Policy and Implicit Cultural Policy.³⁹ His argument defines Explicit Cultural Policy as any statute that a government labelled as such and Implicit Policy as any "political strategy that looks to work on the culture of the territory over which it presides."⁴⁰ His argument for why these terms should be used is clear:

The deployment of these two terms can also help us notably to measure a modern government's explicit cultural policy (what it proclaims that it is doing for culture through its official cultural administration) against its implicit cultural policy (the effective impact on the nation's culture of its action as a whole, including educational, media, industrial, foreign policy, etc.)⁴¹

Here, he shows that a state might use cultural policy to sustain symbolic legitimacy over a swathe of social interactions (and therefore power), not just those things that pertain to "artistic expression, thereby deflecting attention from other forms of policy action upon culture."⁴²



Fig 3.2 Production Still of Billy Elliot featuring Jamie Bell, Director: Stephen Daldry, BBC Films. 2000.

His definitions are useful to this research as they reveal the background context upon which to examine how the state sustains its symbolic legitimacy via its the relationship between policy and participatory art. Actor Network Theory (ANT) references this in regards to power: "When you simply have power – in potentia – nothing happens and you are powerless; when you exert power – in actu – others are performing the action and not you...[power] as an effect, but never as a cause."⁴³ This is addressed in more depth below in Section 3.6, below.

³⁹ J. Ahearne. (2009) 'Cultural Policy Explicit and Implicit: a Distinction and Some Uses'. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 15:2, pp. 141 – 153. p. 143.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 143.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 143.

⁴² Ibid. p. 143.

⁴³ B. Latour (1986) 'The Powers of Association' In Law, J. (ed.) *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul in D. Cressman (2009) *A Brief Overview of Actor-Network Theory: Punctualization, Heterogeneous Engineering & Translation*. Vancouver: Simon Fraser University. ACT Lab/Centre for Policy Research on Science & Technology (CPROST) 2009.

In order to properly elucidate this topic, it is useful to speak of Billy Elliot.⁴⁴ For those who do not know the story, it's about a mother-less boy in a Northern English mining town in the early 1980s who finds his true expression in dance – specifically ballet – to the confusion and anger of his father and brother who are more comfortable with the more traditional, male, working-class pastimes of mining, pubs and boxing. It is a story of 'art' in places where art does not traditionally occur.

In Britain, the place of art within the every day lives of the working class has been a slowly growing concern since the 1960s. Resolution 42 by the Trade Unions Congress in 1960 addressed the role of art within the movement and demanded greater access to the arts for the working class. In 1967, the Arts Council's Royal Charter "contains an explicit pronouncement of the Council's obligation to increase the accessibility of the arts to the public throughout Britain and across social classes."⁴⁵ In the previous chapter, I discussed the rise of this desire to work with people outside of gallery contexts in the 1960s and 70s, such as the rise of the Community Arts Movement, or collectives like Artist Placement Group and other groups that explored 'the social' within their works.

It was, however, New Labour's rise to power in the 1990s and their 1997 election win that brought the picture of the institutional intent of cultural policy into sharper focus. The election was a key moment within the emerging field of participatory art practices in the UK and, specifically for my research, in that it identified 'exclusion' as a major social problem. To address this issue, they proposed new cultural policies that focused on art's functional role within a public sphere, as iterated by the newly set-up Department of Culture Media and Sports' (DCMS):

Culture can also play a key role as a part of the wider 'economic drawing power', which is central to the economic transformation of an area.⁴⁶

and

Arts and sport, cultural and recreational activity, can contribute to neighbourhood renewal and make a *real difference* to health, crime, employment and education in deprived communities.⁴⁷

What this 'real difference' was going to be and how it was to be manifested was a more rough beast to slay and the criticisms launched against this methodology – and against inclusion in general – were rife. Ruth Levitas describes its vicious capitalistic tendencies that exposed class-based hegemonies and gender-bias inequalities embedded in the policies;⁴⁸ Sophie Hope speaks of its reductive qualities in terms of democracy;⁴⁹ David Beel unravels its multitude flaws when implemented in institutional contexts;⁵⁰ the Cultural Policy Collective is effusive in its profoundly anti-democratic nature, its "reductive logic of the marketplace" and it being a sign of "growing crisis of

⁴⁴ Released 2000, writer Lee Hall and director Stephen Daldry, produced by Arts Council England and BBC Films.

⁴⁵ E. Belfiore (2002) 'Art as a means of alleviating social exclusion: Does it really work? A critique of instrumental cultural policies and social impact studies in the UK' *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 8:1. pp. 91 – 106.

⁴⁶ DCMS (2004a) '*Creative Industries Mapping Document*', London: Department of Culture, Media and Sport/Stationery Office. p. 38.

⁴⁷ DCMS (1999a) '*Creative Industries Mapping Document*', London: Department of Culture, Media and Sport/Stationery Office. p. 8. (Emphasis added).

⁴⁸ R. Levitas. (2002) *New Labour and Social Inclusion: Citizenship and Social Exclusion Panel*. University of Bristol, Bristol.

⁴⁹ S. Hope. (2012) *Participating in the 'Wrong' Way? Practice Based Research into Cultural Democracy and the Commissioning of Art to Effect Social Change*. PhD Thesis. University of London. London.

⁵⁰ D. Beel. (2012) *Reinterpreting the Museum: Social Inclusion, Citizenship and the Urban Regeneration of Glasgow*. PhD Thesis. University of Glasgow. Glasgow.

democratic legitimation and social justice,”⁵¹ Andy Hewitt speaks about New Labour’s Third Way cultural policy being a “distortion of the public sphere;”⁵² and Jonathan Vickery claimed it was a strategy of public relations and a way for the government to “construct civic identities” that were amenable to the state.⁵³ Most salient, John McLean asks how: “can art institutions perform any sort of critical function when they are so integrated into the workings of the government to the extent they need to provide evidence of their benefit to the economy, urban regeneration and social inclusion?”⁵⁴ These insights succinctly illustrate Ahearne’s cultural policy’s explicit and implicit machinations and the complex relationship between institutions of power and culture, as well as how ‘culture’ was being employed by the state for specific (neoliberal) ends. Eleonora Belfiore⁵⁵ and Munira Mirza⁵⁶ both speak of a lack of proof that any of the claims of art’s ameliorative benefit to society could be substantiated: whether the ‘real difference’ that was so laudable would ever be, could ever be – or indeed ever was – made manifest.

For art institutions in a persistent battle for funding, this “social dimension of urban regeneration became the new focus of attention.”⁵⁷ Institutions therefore adopted this instrumentalised approach in order to secure funding that aimed to justify public expenditure via art’s perceived ameliorative ability within society in regards to social inclusion or poverty or justice:

Art was subsidised to new higher levels but at a cost: art was instrumentalised as an agent of political, social and cultural complicity...by arts advocates, which enabled claims to be made about the usefulness of art and of arts benefits to economic, social and democratic change.⁵⁸

Thus, artists working with institutions in the participatory practices were given remits guided by the inclusion/exclusion policies. This ‘social dimension’ did two things: firstly, it saw the arts sector of the UK initiating projects and funding positions that explored specifically how art projects could be implemented in ‘deprived communities’ (an equally problematic notion) that might guide the communities towards this elusive inclusion and address the supposed social ills that haunt contemporary society: poverty, crime, the decline of industry, etc.; and, secondly, it supported a plethora of working practices that broadly responded to this policy – much of them are key works with the canon of ‘participatory practices’.⁵⁹ This is a legacy of New Labour cultural policies and, regardless of the ethically complicated nature of the institutional intent regarding ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’, this funding support did provide the substrate for practices that had predominately sat outside the traditional canon of the art world to develop and professionalize.

⁵¹ Culture Policy Collective. (2004) *Beyond Social Inclusion: Towards Cultural Democracy*. Variant Magazine, Issue 20. Glasgow.

⁵² A. Hewitt. (2011) ‘Privatising the Public: Three rhetorics of art’s public good in ‘Third Way’ cultural policy’ in *Art & the Public Sphere*, 1:1, pp. 19 – 36.

⁵³ J. Vickery. (2007) *The Emergence of Culture-led Regeneration: A policy concept and its discontents*, Centre for Cultural Policy Studies, Coventry: University of Warwick.

⁵⁴ J. Maclean. (2012) *The Open Council: a practice led enquiry into improvisation and the self-institution*. PhD Thesis. Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Newcastle University.

⁵⁵ E. Belfiore ‘Art as a means of alleviating social exclusion: Does it really work? A critique of instrumental cultural policies and social impact studies in the UK’ in *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 8:1, 91-106. 2002.

⁵⁶ M. Mirza (ed.) (2006) *Culture Vultures: Is UK arts policy damaging the arts?* London, Policy Exchange Limited.

⁵⁷ E. Belfiore (2002) ‘Art as a means of alleviating social exclusion: Does it really work? A critique of instrumental cultural policies and social impact studies in the UK’ in *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 8:1, pp. 91 – 106.

⁵⁸ A. Hewitt. (2011) ‘Privatising the Public: Three rhetorics of art’s public good in ‘Third Way’ cultural policy’ in *Art & the Public Sphere*, 1:1, pp. 19 – 36.

⁵⁹ Eg. The Hidden Gardens at Tramway. For more information please visit: <http://thehiddengardens.org.uk/>

However, who exactly was defining who was 'excluded' and who was 'included' and what it meant to 'be included' or to 'be excluded' is as problematic as the 'real difference' mentioned earlier by the DCMS. Donald Schön's methodology of the Generative Metaphor is a useful way through this issue. For Schön, the way we speak about social ills gives us an insight to the nature of the problem and this "becomes an interpretive tool for the critical analysis of social policy."⁶⁰ Furthermore he says:

It is not that we ought to think metaphorically about social problems, but that we already do think about them in terms of certain pervasive, tacit generative metaphors; and that we ought to become critically aware of these generative metaphors, to increase the rigour and precision of our analysis of social policy problems by examining the analogies and the 'disanalogies' between the familiar descriptions... and the actual problematic situations that confront us.⁶¹

'Exclusion' and 'Inclusion' here are the generative metaphors that elucidate a thinking premised upon people 'not taking part' in the right sort of society: they were 'excluded' due to factors such as poverty, crime, lack of industry, and so the solution was to 'include' them into the fold of the 'correct' society. The policy assumed the communities that most needed addressing (read as: fixing) were simply not participating in the sort of society that New Labour had in mind, and in order to become the correct kind of citizen 'participation' became the implicit cultural policy solution to this metaphoric ill – it became the active agent to counter the problem.⁶² The solution was an *educative* approach via social inclusion.⁶³ The generative metaphors of Inclusion/Exclusion are salient and exploring how they were premised and implemented reveals certain traits of bias, many of which are also critiqued by theorists mentioned above by Levitas, Hope, Vickery, Hewitt, Belfiore, and Mirza. Most importantly, however, it also reveals that there was often little room for understanding pre-existing cultural identities. As Miles suggest:

cultural norms tend to remain with an arts bureaucracy which reproduces an older parochialism. So that access is widened to a culture predetermined in the image of the governing cultural body. Arts publics are thereby rendered *passive receivers of culture* rather than being empowered to shape cultures.⁶⁴

In other words, the public's understanding of 'culture' was superseded by a predetermined 'social inclusion' culture framed by the dominant governing body, and any local culture that was different to this hegemony was, it is assumed, to be left behind when entering into this new, socially-inclusive, consensual contract. Much like Rancière's understanding of *The Ethical Turn*, the explicit cultural policy had an implicit effect of ignoring indigenous cultural activities in favour of a consensual, socially inclusive contract.⁶⁵

This is where Billy Elliot comes dancing in again. While the action of the film takes place before New Labour's election, it was made in the time of the social inclusion art agenda, and supported by these policies via funding by national organisations such as BBC films and the Arts Council England (ACE). ACE is particularly clear that they fund

⁶⁰ D. Schön. (1979) 'Generative Metaphor: A Perspective on Problem-Setting in Social Policy' in A. Ortony (ed.) *Metaphor and Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 254 – 284.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² See, for example, Andy Hewitt (2011) as he particularly clear about this approach.

⁶³ A. Hewitt. (2011) 'Privatising the Public: Three rhetorics of art's public good in 'Third Way' cultural policy' in *Art & the Public Sphere*, 1:1, pp. 19 – 36.

⁶⁴ M. Miles. (2005) 'Interruptions': Testing the Rhetoric of Culturally Led Urban Development', *Urban Studies*, 42: 5/6: pp. 889 – 911. p. 890 (Emphasis added).

⁶⁵ J. Rancière. (2006) 'The Ethical Turn of Aesthetics and Politics' Critical Horizons 7:1 in *Malaise dans l'Esthétique*. Paris: Galilée. 2004. pp. 143 – 173.

projects that: “...see broader recognition of the ways in which visual artists contribute to sustainable communities.... where access to high quality visual art and architecture can make a demonstrable difference.”⁶⁶

Viewing the film through the generative metaphor lens, it becomes a film about how an art-form (indeed, a ‘high art’ form: ballet) offered a new and better life to the working class; a way out of a post-industrialist/post-Fordist/working-class way of life and into the gleaming and graceful city. Indigent culture is side-lined, undesirable, and certainly not the way of the future: the boxing that Billy was encouraged to do but avoids in favour of dance is mirrored by the violence of his brother Tony who punches his father as he tries to cross the picket-line in order secure funds for Billy’s dance audition. Tony, as representative of the ‘old culture’ of protest, of boxing and of mining literally stands in the way of Billy’s future, and any valorisation of this ‘old culture’ and its importance to its community, is placed in stark contrast to Billy’s brilliant and graceful success in the future. The story told this way becomes: *mining towns are dead, and the people who live within them are living in the past – only art can save you now*. It represents the voice of the state (the institution) whose intent was to instrumentalise art to specific social ends and reveals, via the interconnectedness of Explicit and Implicit Cultural Policy, the specific, state-sanctioned (i.e. institutional), social and economic outcomes of cultural policy that align with a state’s *Gouvernementalité*. This educative approach differs from my understanding of participation and I unravel a relationship between ‘pedagogy’ and participation’ in the following section.

3.4 Education Vs. Participation

The Latin root of ‘pedagogy’ literally means ‘to lead the child’ stemming from the Greek *pais* (child) and *agogos* (leader, from *agein* meaning: ‘to lead’).⁶⁷ Educational projects are therefore designed around specific learning outcomes set by ‘a leader’ – i.e. the Department of Education, the Local Authority, or the institution itself – and the student is required to follow those outcomes until she/he has been led to the correct understanding. In other words, there are ‘end products’ that the educational project should aim to achieve via the teacher ‘leading’ those involved in the project.

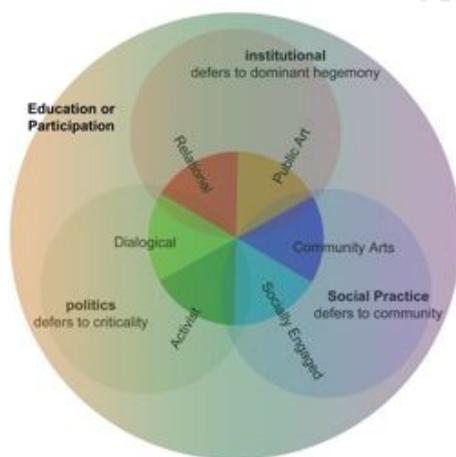


Fig 3.3 The Place of Education & Participation In References To The Interacting Spheres of Participation. Venn Diagram, 2013.

Participation, in contrast, comes from the Latin *participat* meaning 'shared in' and stems from the verb *participare*, stemming from *pars, part* (part) and *capere* (take),⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Arts Council England (ACE), 2008.

⁶⁷ 'Pedagogy' Etymology Online, (n.d.) <http://www.etymonline.com/pedagogue>. (Available online – Accessed 11 March, 2015).

⁶⁸ 'Participate'. OED Online. *Oxford University Press*. September 2014 (Available online – Accessed 11 March, 2015)

and therefore suggests a more collaborative and egalitarian process that has no necessarily premeditated outcomes. While the two are often collapsed, and complexly interwoven – no doubt participation involves some education and vice versa – the clarification of whether an institutionally-based participatory project is educational or participatory can help clarify whether the project's intention is to “construct civic identities”⁶⁹ amenable to the state, or if it is a true collaborative approach that is based on a dialogic, relational model with a mutual, shared and common inquiry. This is important as it reveals if an institution sees people as either ‘those to be educated’ or ‘those with whom to participate’.⁷⁰

Rancière clarifies this dichotomy, paying attention to the claims that education can provide ‘emancipation’. He argues that this is false because it is premised upon a notion that those ‘who do not know’ should be filled with knowledge by those that ‘do know.’ Rancière suggests that this form of education is flawed as it assumes a pre-conditioned inequality and the system itself recapitulates inequality though the assumption that correct things need to be learned/assimilated in order to receive liberation. He expands this idea in his novel *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1987) where tells the tale of a teacher of French Literature who takes a post teaching French Literature in a Dutch university, despite him having no Dutch and the students having no French. This relationship is metaphorical of the ‘knowing/unknowing’ system of education, but is also synonymous with many of the current museums/gallery/public art projects that present one group of people that ‘know’ and one group of people that ‘don’t know’ – be that knowledge of art, culture, history, class, notions of ‘civilisation’ or any myriad of ideologies.

How the hero of the book – Jacotot, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* – ‘teaches’ the students is via organising his lessons:

around an object which they can nonetheless study together – a bilingual edition of Fénelon’s *Télémaque*. With the help of an interpreter, he asks the students to read it by using the translation, to review continuously what they are learning and then to write, in French, what they think of the book. Having expected work of lamentable standard he is surprised by the quality of the students’ work. Although he has taught the students precisely nothing, they for their part have learned to read French Literature.... This experiment leads Jacotot to revise his prior assumptions, notably the assumption that in order to teach, a teacher needs to be in possession of knowledge that s/he can then explain to the students...From this [Rancière] concludes there is no necessary link between teaching and having knowledge. In other words, the inequality which education is designed to address should be remedied not by seeking to transfer knowledge (be it either through progressive or authoritarian means) but by establishing a relationship of equality between master and student, between the one who demands that intelligence manifest itself and the other who develops his or her own intellect.⁷¹

This succinct presentation of Rancière’s concepts points towards an understanding that if an educational process that aims to redress inequality is, in fact, actually predicated upon that very inequality, it therefore would be impossible for it to be

⁶⁹ J. Vickery. (2007) *The Emergence of Culture-led Regeneration: A policy concept and its discontents*. Centre for Cultural Policy Studies, Coventry: University of Warwick.

⁷⁰ This is not to suggest that all education is necessarily framed on unequal hierarchies between ‘master’ and ‘student’ (see, for example, ‘Critical Theory and Beyond: Further Perspectives on Emancipatory Education’ (1990) *Adult Education Quarterly*, 40:3. pp. 125 – 138) or that all participation always occurs on egalitarian grounds, only that the *intentions* can lead to ethical complications when an artist is employed to work with a public by an institution.

⁷¹ C. Pelletier. (2008) ‘Emancipation, Equality and Education: Rancière's Critique of Bourdieu and the Question of Performativity.’ *Discourse*, October, 2008. p. 7.

employed in an emancipatory manner.

In regards to 'participatory projects' this is apparent in the education programmes within art museum/gallery settings that are designed to 'lead the child' towards some sort of understanding that is possessed by the museum/gallery/artist – be that skills, concepts or insights about art, culture or even politics. Importantly, these programmes do not necessarily pertain to actual children, but are often directed towards the working class, juvenile delinquents, 'deprived' communities or the elderly, and illustrates Rancière's point that outreach/education projects are often designed/intended for those that *do not participate* in the correct form of existence – children without knowledge, uncultured working classes, the criminal underclasses, the poor or the isolated/infirm. These programmes – and even progressive education programmes are presented as an emancipatory experience – are still predicated on knowledge flowing from the 'knower' to the 'unknower' and therefore can never be truly emancipatory, as they are just recapitulating the dominant hegemony. Rather, as Rancière suggests, real 'education' can only occur when there is an equality between those that are in power and those that are not – between those with something to teach and those that wish to expand their intellect on their own terms.

There is a wider discussion in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1991) about class and relevant concerns about democracy within his thesis, but the salient point in regards to 'participatory projects' is that the majority of 'emancipatory education' that many arts institutions (and artists) undertake are unethically and problematically designed – regardless of well-meaning intention – and thus 'education' within participatory settings can only replicate and recapitulate power structures, rather than offer emancipatory insights. Therefore, knowing if an institution is enacting 'education' in the guise of 'participation' is key to understanding ethical relationships, but also vital to the political agency of the practice.

3.5 Exodus vs. Engagement (Or: If they're so bad, why should we work with them?)

Radical artists and those with grassroots, left-wing agendas decry the 'education' approach as the social engineering tendencies of a neoliberal state. Indeed, artists such as the Critical Art Ensemble do just this and critique how "Cultural Institutions... function as corporate alibis ... and too often function within the frame of research and development of cultural products at the service of profit and enterprise."⁷² Their works such as *Concerned Citizens of Kyoto* (2011) and *WHaM (Winning Hearts and Minds)* (2012) both use participatory projects to critique institutions of art for not challenging the globalised neoliberal and capitalist agenda. Their radical approach is a good example of Activist Art that aims to engage in participatory artworks for political ends and resist the agendas of dominant institutions.

Chantal Mouffe, however, suggests that the "years in which the hegemony of neo-liberalism was unchallenged have fortunately come to a close"⁷³ and draws on examples of recent protests such as the Occupy movement and the Arab Spring to highlight a renewed interest in radical, leftist politics. She makes a distinction, however, between two differing approaches to institutions and suggests two modalities of operation: that of an Exodus and that of an Engagement.⁷⁴ In the former, she refers to the works of Negri and Hardt (e.g. *Empire* (2000), *Multitude* (2004) and *Commonwealth*

⁷² Critical Art Ensemble. (2012) *Disturbances*. Four Corners Books. London. p. 158.

⁷³C. Mouffe. (2013) *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*. Verso. London. p. 65.

⁷⁴ Whilst she is speaking in regards to politics here, it is equally as relevant to the context of participatory art institutions, both because many of them are governmentally funded and therefore relate to Foucault's notions of *Gouvernementalité*.

(2009))⁷⁵ as examples of arguments in favour of a break with dominant institutions that support globalisation and neoliberalism. She suggests that radical thinkers on the left, (including Negri, Hardt as well as Paolo Virno) advocate a withdrawal from such institution as it is only through an exodus that a new democracy could be constructed:

‘Exodus’ is a fully-fledged model of political action capable of confronting the challenges of modern politics. It consists in a mass defection from the state aiming at developing the ‘publicness of Intellect’ outside of work and in opposition to it. This requires the development of a non-state public sphere and a radically new type of democracy framed in terms of the construction and experimentation of forms of non-representative and extra-parliamentary democracy organised around leagues, councils and soviets.⁷⁶

This model suggests that it is only via deserting the state – a withdrawal – that societies can foster the self-organisation of new democracies so vital to reconfiguring the globalised, neoliberal world. In terms of participatory practices this would mean the only correct political option when working with societies would be to work outwith of institutional frameworks as this would be the only way to avoid becoming a tool of state and its right-wing, social engineering tendencies.

It is, however, equally true that any ‘radical’ artist working with the public and standing in opposition to capitalism and neoliberal politics is also enacting a type of social engineering, only of a different society: a leftist world instead of a neoliberal one. In a post-modern, pluralistic world, neither can we assume that one approach is morally ‘bad’ or ‘better’ than another, only that they have different outcomes. Mouffe’s delineation of ‘politics’ and ‘the political’ is useful to remember here, and reminds the reader of the issues of basing participatory projects in a singular politics and not the exploration of dissensus. An exodus model would result in a consensual politics of radical leftism and foreclose a democratic dissensus: those on the neoliberal side of the political spectrum have legitimate rights, too. Moreover, she cannot conceptualise “the possibility for social movements, on their own, to bring about a new type of society where a ‘real’ democracy could exist without the need for the state or other forms of political institutions. *Without any institutional relays, they will not be able to bring about any significant changes in the structures of power.*”⁷⁷ In other words, the structures of power would still continue to function effectively for the population at large, and a withdrawal approach would not lead to any significant change or reformatted, more egalitarian society.

Additionally, Mouffe reads the radical transgression against the state via an exodus through Gramsci’s notion of ‘hegemony through naturalisation’: “A situation where demands which challenge the hegemonic order are appropriated by the existing system so as to satisfy them in a way that neutralises their subversive potential.” Or, within an artistic context, it is a false assumption that “radical art equals transgressive art, and the more radical, the more transgressive [because] there is no transgression that cannot be recuperated by the dominant hegemony.”⁷⁸ The dominant hegemonies of the state would reorder the transgression into its ideology and functioning, and so would not provide new democratic models and subjectivities, but rather a recapitulation of that hegemony.⁷⁹ Instead of this recapitulation she suggests a re-articulation of that

⁷⁵ M. Hardt & A. Negri. (2000) *Empire*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; M. Hardt & A. Negri. (2004) *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, New York, Penguin Press, and M. Hardt & A. Negri. (2009) *Commonwealth*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.

⁷⁶ C. Mouffe. (2013) *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*. Verso. London. p. 70.

⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 77. (Emphasis added).

⁷⁸ C. Mouffe. (2007) *Agonistic Politics and Artistic Practices* (Lecture) Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow, 2nd March.

⁷⁹ This is apparent today with the state employing the activist strategies of the Community Art Movement to enact neoliberal ideologies – i.e. the Social Inclusion remits of the project that inspired *Legacy*...

hegemony which can only be conceived with an 'engagement' with hegemonic institutions. She argues that "through a combination of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary transformations of those institutions, so as to make them a vehicle for the expression of the manifold of democratic demands which would extend the principles of equality to as many social relations as possible."⁸⁰

It is therefore in working *with* institutions and engaging them, challenging them and developing agonistic relationships with them that provides the possibility for transformation of the social order in more productive ways than the exodus model, as the 'withdrawal' model is premised on false and impractical approaches.

The key point to consider at this juncture is that art can still engage with the important issues that face the world, not because it closes the old order, but because art – especially participatory practices – is "a field for thinking."⁸¹ Simon Shiekh, in his short essay *Public Spheres and the Functions of Progressive Art Institutions* (2004)⁸² argues that art holds a "crucial position and potential in contemporary society"⁸³ and art and art institutions offer the critical space for thinking through the problematic power relations of a globalised, commercialised world:

The field of art has become a field of possibilities, of exchange and comparative analysis...crucially [it] can act as a cross field, an intermediary between different fields, modes of perception and thinking, as well as between very different positions and subjectivities.⁸⁴

As such, it is art itself that offers the tools for thinking through the problems that arise from institutional intent and cultural policy

I introduced the Artist Placement Group (APG) in the previous chapter and recall them here as their work addressed an artist's relationship to institutions of cultural transmission by organising "placements or residencies in a range of private corporations and public bodies."⁸⁵ This approach began to shift focus away from the traditional structure of the dominant institution and the artist that did its bidding, and instead began to facilitate a relational, dialogic approach where the artist worked directly with institutions to explore not only art, but the institution itself. Unlike projects from institutions that aimed to pull the audience into the museum, APG "operated on the inverse principle of pushing the artist *out* into society."⁸⁶ Steveni describes the first projects and the group's formation:

I went first to the Department of Environment [DOE], to talk to the Chief Planner. When they realised it wasn't to put pictures up in the DOE's head offices in Marsham Street to make that terrible *dead* building *better*, but was about something quite different, they, the Chief Planner said, 'we've got these three studies, looking at the Inner Cities; in Birmingham, Liverpool and Lambeth, perhaps you could join the Inner City teams as artists' ...the Inner Area Study team in Small Heath, just under Spaghetti Junction, agreed to it. So this was the site the artist would work in... There was a substantial report published by the DOE, IAS/B/14, *You, Me, Here*

⁸⁰ C. Mouffe. (2013) *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*. Verso, London. p. 75.

⁸¹ Sheikh, S. (2004a) 'Public Spheres and the Functions of Progressive Art Institutions' Republic website http://www.republicart.net/disc/institution/sheikh01_en.htm. (Available online – Accessed 13 November 2013).

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ C. Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London, Verso. p. 166.

⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 166. (Emphasis original).

We Are, Artist Placement Group Project. It has gone into the thinking of how artists might be engaged in such ways...

[During the project] the residents of Small Heath were [given the opportunity] to respond to the Department of Environment's proposals and plans for what they saw should happen in Small Heath, had been facilitated by the APG team being onsite. By use of the new technology (video) initially brought in by the artist and extended to the community, they could actually talk right back to the DOE central offices on the plans which were being proposed to them and integrate their responses from the live context under discussion, directly into the Department's findings. Another project which came from this placement, besides the DOE published report (which has it all) was that numbers of the community, students, young people who came into contact with the artist and actor's team, (the artist additionally made a personal film from his experiences) discovered they could actually take up subjects like art, drama, and dance, which was stimulated by the artist team being there. So there were some very positive outcomes for both artist participants, and from the hosting organisation from this placement...In Ian Breakwell's [the artist on the Small Heath project] assessment of a two-way success, this placement succeeded in bringing un-foreseen issues to the surface, with its influence continuing today.⁸⁷

This project is an example of the APG projects that sought a functional shift and reversal from the purely singular directional flow of power/information from the institution to the public to allowing the public to respond via these participatory projects and bring "un-foreseen issues to the surface". The challenge of the role of the institution brought about new subjectivities. This was done via APG making an important distinction of the position of artist within the institution that ensured the political and aesthetic independence, explained in point 5 of their manifesto:

Artist Placement Group Manifesto:

- The context is half the work.
- The function of medium in art is determined not so much by that factual object, as by the process & the levels of attention to which the work aims.
- That the proper contribution of art to society is art.
- That the status of artists within organisations must necessarily be in line with other professional persons, engaged within the organisation.
- *That the status of the artist within organisations is independent, bound by the invitation, rather than by any instruction from authority within the organisation, and to the long-term objectives of the whole of society.*
- That, for optimum results, the position of the artist within an organisation (in the initial stages at least) should facilitate a form of cross-referencing between departments.⁸⁸

This matter of working with but still remaining independent was a key function of their work that, they felt, avoided being instrumentalised by the institution with whom they were working. Indeed, their independence was seen as essential to the functioning of the projects: "outcomes were not determined in advance, and entirely depended on the individual artist in a given context; this was what APG called the 'open brief'."⁸⁹ The

⁸⁷ Stevani, B (2004) in conversation with Emily Pringle. 'Repositioning Art in the Decision-Making Processes of Society' *Interrupt website* <http://www.interrupt.org.uk/symposia/educator/repositioning-art/> (Available online – Accessed 5 June 2013). (Emphasis original).

⁸⁸ 'APG manifesto'. (1980) *Art In Practice website*. <http://practiceart.blogspot.co.uk/2011/01/artist-placement-group-manifesto.html>. (Available online – Accessed 1 October 2014) (Emphasis added).

⁸⁹ C. Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London, Verso. p. 166. Additional conversations with the Author and B. Stevani have confirmed this a-political stance on

'open brief' approach was aligned to the notion that the artist be an *Incidental Person* rather than a direct employee of the institution, and this freedom meant that the artists could respond directly and critically to the actions and functioning of the institution itself without being concerned about the hierarchy of employment or reciprocity that arises out of being indentured to an organisation.

For many institutions, this was an uncomfortable position ("If a man wants to overthrow the capitalist system, I don't see why, as a capitalist, I should provide the money for him to do it"⁹⁰) as it called into question the institutions' relationship with society at large, challenging how and why they functioned within society. In other words, through an artistic intervention, APG aimed to examine the intentions of the institution with the institution itself.

The necessity for the artist to be an Incidental Person and not an employee of the business required, however, that they needed to seek public funds for their project, and it is ironic that this political inquiry into institutions was unwelcome by the dominant artistic institution: the Arts Council. In 1971, the Arts Council discontinued APG's funding, accusing them of "being more concerned with Social Engineering than with straight Art"⁹¹ and "[i]t is not the business of the Arts Council to support 'social engineering'."⁹² Put into a historical context, Steveni similarly notes the irony that the New Labour funded Arts Councils not only come around to support this way of thinking, but also actively pursue this way of working as legitimate and desirable, and "the social context is [now] a recognised development area by both the British Council and Arts Council."⁹³

A modern-day example of a project that also challenges the intentions of the institution is the *Pontification, Prevarication*⁹⁴ by artist collective Incidental People at the National Museum of Cardiff in 2013. Like APG before it, the insistence of an agonistic relationship with the institution with whom they work allows the emergence of new subjectivities and the potential for transformation.

The documentation of the project describes how the collective designed a museum-based programme that was premised, driven and formulated by lies – lies from the artists, lies from the participants (a group of children), lies from the institution: all intentional and used as a methodology to explore the premise of 'educational' project of museums. The project explored how to ethically and humorously engage an institution in its own self-reflection:

We, as project producers, followed the directions that their lies sketched out, working to help realise and substantiate [the participants] lies, rather than tidy them up, edit them down or create a coherent world view that would stretch across the exhibition. To recover our own sense of play in the process rather than being owners of it. And to recover the (always latent) sense of [the] museum itself as a place of daydream, fantasy and misbehaviour.

APG's behalf, but did not exclude the artists themselves working in a context from approaching a specific political stance. (B. Steveni in recorded conversation with author 6 February, 2014a. Peckham, London).

⁹⁰ Brisley, interview with Peter Byrom (1975), cited in K. Dodd (1992) *Artists Placement Group 1966–1976*, MA thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, p. 24 in C. Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London, Verso.

⁹¹ Robin Campbell, letter of 11 January 1971 to APG, in C. Bishop. Ibid.

⁹² Robin Campbell, letter of 11 January 1971 to APG, in C. Bishop. Ibid.

⁹³ Steveni, B (2004) in conversation with Emily Pringle. 'Repositioning Art in the Decision-Making Processes of Society' Interrupt website <http://www.interrupt.org.uk/symposia/educator/repositioning-art/> 04 Oct. (Available online – Accessed 5 June 2013). (Emphasis original).

⁹⁴ 'Pontification, Prevarication' Incidental People website (2013) www.theincidental.com/blog/pontification-prevarication/ (Available online – Accessed 12 November 2014).

So [the participants] took a human skeleton, split it in half and created two new creatures from it. We went to an actual dig site and they buried those bones, “discovered” them and then took pinhole camera pictures of these hoax finds. They grabbed scraps of plant and rubbish from the museum gardens and made strange photographic plates from them. They took a roman pot and said it was a watermelon. They made drawings of museum animals and then claimed they were Palaeolithic paintings of ancient folk stories. They demanded that they paint actual stuffed animals and then got thoroughly disgusted when we actually let them do it. They did some weird stuff.⁹⁵

The project challenged the intentions of a participatory museum project with children as necessarily pedagogical and informative, but rather, the museum became a place of doubt and questioning. Operating with principles inverse to outreach and education projects, it did not attempt to use participatory projects as a place to “construct civic identities”⁹⁶ that were amenable to the state, but rather reverse and challenge the intentions of the institution as a place that has both the authority and agency to do so. The project contrasted the notions of pedagogy and participation and explored how to ethically and humorously engage an institution in its own self-reflection. What the *Pontification, Prevarication* art project did was to problematize the purpose of such an institution and in doing so it offered new subjectivities to emerge. Importantly, as with the APG projects, they worked in engagement with the institutions themselves: the insights and potentials for transformation were drawn not from an exodus approach, nor an activist critique, but rather via an *engagement with*. The potential for hegemonic shift, as Mouffe suggests, can only occur in such agonistic relationships.

Understanding an artistic institution’s intention within participatory projects is therefore essential, and refer to my own project *Legacy...* mentioned in the introduction as example of an artwork that worked with an artistic institution to examine policy and intent, and in doing so, allowed new subjectivities to emerge. As with the Incidental Persons and the APG projects, a productive, agonistic relationship with the institutions in critiquing and challenging how hegemonies operate – and in what ways they could be thought of differently and not along an oppressive consensus – provides a model for ethical participatory practices within institutional settings.

3.6 Not Institutional Critique

As mentioned above, this ‘critique’ of institutions might suggest a theoretical affinity with Institutional Critique (IC). Indeed, this research is indebted to the legacy of IC for clearing a conceptual path for this research to occur in that, historically, it was an approach that “reflected critically on its own place within galleries and museums and on the concept and social function of art itself,”⁹⁷ much in the same way that this research explores a relationship and projects that occur between institutions, artists and the social realm.

The ‘field’ of IC emerged in the late 1970s and is diverse in its forms, with practitioners such as Hans Haake, and later, Andrea Fraser, Michael Asher and Carey Young, each developing diverse aesthetic responses to the authority and machinations of art institutions. Predominately, the genre aimed to explore the role of the museum/gallery complex by critiquing its funding structures, its supposed objectivity, and its cultural

⁹⁵ Further information on this project is available at: <http://www.theincidental.com/blog/pontification-prevarication/>

⁹⁶ J. Vickery. (2007) *The Emergence of Culture-led Regeneration: A policy concept and its discontents*, Centre for Cultural Policy Studies, Coventry: University of Warwick.

⁹⁷ Fried, L. (2010) Some Alternatives to Institutional Critique *ART21 Magazine* (<http://blog.art21.org/2010/04/30/some-alternatives-to-institutional-critique-2/#.VjR7kWThBcz>) April 30, 2010 (Available Online - Accessed October 31st, 2015).

authority. Fundamentally, the 'genre' aimed to challenge an art institution's dominance within the art world.

This research, however, does not adhere to such an essentialist social construct of dominance in which one social agent (i.e. institutions) is placed in power and another (i.e. artists/community) is presented as a victim of that power. I avoid this construct because it actually reinforces the uneven relationships of power in which the 'powerless' have, by their own agency, declared themselves eternal victims of a more powerful force: Rancière challenges this approach, not least because it assumes a pre-conditioned inequality.⁹⁸ Latour et al similarly challenge this approach via their Actor Network Theory in that it understands that an a priori assumption of power "has the effect of reifying those who are successful while obscuring the methods by which such large-scale social control is achieved and precariously maintained."⁹⁹ To unravel this further, it is helpful to describe the notoriously obtuse framework of ANT:

ANT studies associations between heterogeneous actors - associations that are proposed and attempted, failures or successes. There is literally nothing else, for ANT, except associations. These associations, in turn, can be used to describe how networks come to be larger and more influential than others, how they come to be more durable through enrolling both social and material actors, and where power comes from and how it is exerted. Power (or lack thereof) and connectivity are intertwined then, to speak of one is to speak of the other. We should not ask if this network is more powerful than another; rather, we should ask if this association is stronger than another one.¹⁰⁰

It is obvious how this framework is important to my research, in that I seek to explore the relationship between entities of 'power (i.e., institutions) and how they 'enact' those powers. In regards to IC and how to conceive of a world in which there are 'powerful' institutions, ANT suggests:

The social world is neither entirely social nor inevitable [and] if we assume size and power without explaining how it is performed and made durable we miss out on explaining how [the] world we inhabit is performed.¹⁰¹

In other words, it is 'true' that the institution may have access to superior resources or have more associations/networks in regards to being able to enact a participatory project, however, to think of them as fixed is not helpful as it merely perpetuates such a world order. IC operates in such a manner in that it presupposes the museum/gallery has – essentially – access to powers and resources and therefore artists/art have lesser power. I do not disagree that the museum/gallery complex have access to different resources and/or powers and can mobilise mechanisms to enact/enforce a dominant hegemony, however, I would not assume this to be an essential fact, nor that there are other mechanisms that artists/art can access outwith of the institution's 'control'. In regards to an institution's power,

Similarly, a parallel could be drawn with my interest in working *within* institutions, and location of the majority of IC's works. While certainly critical of art institutions, many of

⁹⁸ J. Rancière. (1987) *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*. (Trans. Kristen Ross) Stanford, Stanford University Press.

⁹⁹ J. Law, (1986). *Power, action, and belief: a new sociology of knowledge*. London Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul in D. Cressman (2009) *A Brief Overview of Actor-Network Theory: Punctualization, Heterogeneous Engineering & Translation*. Vancouver: Simon Fraser University. ACT Lab/Centre for Policy Research on Science & Technology (CPROST) 2009.

¹⁰⁰ D. Cressman (2009) *A Brief Overview of Actor-Network Theory: Punctualization, Heterogeneous Engineering & Translation*. Vancouver: Simon Fraser University. ACT Lab/Centre for Policy Research on Science & Technology (CPROST) 2009. P. 5

¹⁰¹ Ibid. P.6

the works were also simultaneously sited *within* the museum/gallery complex: i.e., Haake's *Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Board of Trustees* (1974), Fraser's *Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk* (1989) or even Young's *Speech Acts* (2009). This so-called "institutionalisation of institutional critique"¹⁰² exemplifies Mouffe's notion that "radical art equals transgressive art, and the more radical, the more transgressive [because] there is no transgression that cannot be recuperated by the dominant hegemony."¹⁰³ While I am also interested in locating this research *within* the institutions, the nature of participatory projects aims to expand the sites of meaning beyond the gallery: the research is not solely concerned with the art world, but also in the realms of cultural policy and the social sphere in general, and their intersection. As such, this research avoids the isolated and self-referential art-world critique that is employed by IC.

Additionally, the above 'engagement' relationship with institutions underlies the main difference to this research and Institutional Critique. An agonistic participatory practice, with its relationship with a 'public' – and its associated multiple perspectives – complicates the binary relationship that is referenced in the standard IC model. Institutional Critique, as Alana Jelenick suggests, "tends to posit a binary model of victims and villains"¹⁰⁴ – and my inquiry is based on a more complicated engagement with institutions that is not so dichotomously oriented.

Finally, this research also understands, that 'the institution' is not a hermetic, monolithic construct. Nor does it conceive of it as a Machiavellian and/or a 'bad' mechanism that wishes to only enact its own dominance. Katie Bruce from the Gallery of Modern Art (Glasgow) is on record as saying:

I think an institution invites you. From an institutional perspective we are careful about the artists that we ask in, and that is through experience, and some of that criticalness is inviting in an artist to ask difficult questions that, as an institution, you are not able to ask. And I think there is something interesting in that possibility. And that might be conflicts that might not be able to be aired within a team, or within an institution or Local Council's structure, because of the way that the system works. But if you have an artist in there who is able to do that, then [they can do that] They might not say in the interview "please can you cause a massive great big conflict", but they're aware of what they're asking.¹⁰⁵

Here, the institution is conceptualized as being made up of people who may wish to also be critical of their workplace, and that dominant hegemonies are capable of being pierced from many different directions, both from within and without the hegemonies themselves. The 'institution' is therefore not necessarily a homogenous, faceless machine, but rather is made up of individual people and those individuals can also – to some degree – critique and work agnostically with their institution. They are important allies for any participatory artist and community who engage with them. Secondly, institutions themselves also often seek to work with artists and communities in agonistic and productively conflictual relationships, as they can also be interested in how to enact ethical and critical participatory projects. This approach therefore stands aside from the IC approach in that it does not recapitulate the binary oppositions of IC, but rather argues for a more complicated relationship.

¹⁰² Bridges, S. (2006) I Am Institution (Hear Me Roar). <http://www.mav.org.es/documentos/ENSAYOS%20BIBLIOTECA/StevenBridges,%20museo%20inst%20Fraser.pdf> December 2006. (Available Online - Accessed November 2nd, 2015).

¹⁰³ C. Mouffe. (2007) *Agonistic Politics and Artistic Practices* (Lecture) Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow, 2nd March.

¹⁰⁴ A. Jelenick. (2013) *This Is Not Art: Activism and Other 'Not-Art'* London, I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd.

¹⁰⁵ Kate Bruce. Precarious Comrades Seminar. Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow, 25 March 2015.

3.7 Conclusion

Rejecting the exodus model in favour of Mouffe's understanding of 'engagement' with institutions presents the possibility of reconfiguring 'institutions' as something that – while having access to resources and different sorts of powers – are not 'essentially' fixed or monolithic in regards to their 'dominance' in enacting participatory projects, nor necessarily 'bad' because of their dominance. Configuring 'institutions' in such a way then presents a mechanism for thinking through problems that arise from institutional intent and cultural policy, both critically, but also agonistically. These mechanisms of thinking can emerge via conflict, as explored in the following chapter.

All Contents Copyright Anthony Schrag 2015

4. Conflict: Actors in Pursuit of Incompatible Goals



Fig 4.1 The author with semi-automatic machine-gun when he was 6-years old, Allan Schrag, Photograph, 1981.

4.0. Introduction

This chapter begins with two personal anecdotes that introduce notions of conflict: one from an academic perspective and the other from personal experience. I use them both as they introduce difference aspects of the central tenet of my research and begin to set the parameters of what is meant by 'conflict' within this text.

The chapter then looks at the place of conflict in our world, generally, from the natural world, to physics to biology. I take such a broad view of this topic as the grist of 'participation' rarely takes its form from aesthetic or art historical contexts, but rather the gamut of human experience and thus there is a necessity to see conflict in such a broad framework. I pay particular attention to the theorist Johan Galtung and his understanding of conflict. It is followed by reference to sociological studies regarding conflict and conflict resolution, including analysis of conflict resolution, violence and risk within conflictual situations.

The final section takes examples from others within the field of participatory arts and explores how they have addressed conflict. It concludes with a presentation of the productive notions of dissensus, particularly in regards to the theories of Claire Bishop and Grant Kester.

4.1 Conflict and Utopia: The Red Book and the Black

On the third floor of the Newcastle University library, due to either a hiccup of filing or a case of serendipitous categorisation, I discovered Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Art of War* (1521, trans. Lynch 2003) housed next to *Picture Imperfect: Utopian thought for an Anti-Utopian Age* (2005) by Russell Jacoby. I stumbled upon them when attempting to understand 'conflict' and how it fit within my research. I enjoyed the juxtaposition between these oppositional notions – the violence and tragedy of war and the halcyon aspirations of utopia – and how the books were pressed so close to each other. That the titles both contained allusions to 'art' seemed significant, and the books themselves – a red one and a black one – also seemed so suited. They were a similar size and density, and their covers shared a similar texture and the collision of their subject matter – conflict and utopia – resonated with my interests, although I couldn't immediately say what it was about their juxtaposition that attracted me: the two notions sitting together instinctually satisfied a deep understanding of my research questions.

In the introduction of *The Art of War*, Christopher Lynch's 2003 translation declares Machiavelli's opus to be the "birth of modern military thought,"¹ revealing it as a seminal text in western literature on conflict, specifically war. To summarise the book, it explores the formalisation of the conflictual urge – the place of war within a civic society. Machiavelli makes his arguments via a dialogue between compatriots that explores the ancient records of war, military strategy, civic society and the philosophy of war, leading to an understanding that war is a natural state of humanity and conflict cannot be eradicated from human existence, and thus should be employed productively. While the formalised and extreme warring end of conflict is not part of my research – explained below – what I felt was useful was the recognition that Machiavelli sees conflict as a stepping stone to a better world, towards his definition of utopia.

Jacoby's text² looks at different types of utopias and their place within western thought over the last 150 years. One of his key points, while not new, is that utopias are important because it is through them that we develop aspirations, and from those aspirations our politics:

Utopian thinking does not undermine or discount real reforms. Indeed, it is almost the opposite: practical reforms depend on utopian dreaming....Utopian thought consists of more than daydreams and doodles. It emerges out of and returns to contemporary political realities. As I see it, this contradiction defines the utopian project: it partakes at once of the limited choices of the day and unlimited possibilities of the morrow.³

Utopias therefore have a political agenda because they espouse the promise of an alternative world order. However, due to the heterogeneous and pluralistic nature of societies that contain different and often oppositional visions of utopia, the plurality of these political agendas and the impossibility of each and every utopian future being true thus predicates political conflict because the need for one to secure one's specific utopia is incompatible with another's need to secure their own. His point – that the imaginary possibility of utopias (in general) is an important social and developmental mechanism of pluralistic societies – is couched in an argument that recognises utopia has generative relationship to conflict. Considering this, the two books sit together in utopia/conflict Mobius strip: Machiavelli suggests to achieving his utopia via conflict itself, and Jacoby suggests that conflict is a symbiotic product of utopias within a democratic order.

To begin to bring these notions back into the realm of artistic practice, in *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics* (2004), Claire Bishop paraphrases Laclau and Mouffe in arguing that "a democratic society is one in which relations of conflict are sustained, not erased."⁴ In other words (and, not to place undue emphasis on the real or imagined utopian notions of contemporary democracy) conflict and utopia coexist within the western social realm. These books sitting next to each other are a metaphor for this: while 'about' oppositional subjects, they fundamentally explore the same topic – the place of conflict in attempting to create a better world. In the previous chapters, I have looked at the instrumentalisation of participatory practices by institutions for ameliorative and/or political ends – i.e. how institutions employ the practice to build

¹ N. Machiavelli. [1521] (2003) *The Art of War*, translated by Lynch, C., Chicago, The University of Chicago Press. p. xiii.

² R. Jacoby. (2005) *Picture Imperfect: Utopian thought for an Anti-Utopian Age*. New York, Columbia University Press.

³ Ibid. p. 146.

⁴ C. Bishop. (2004) 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics'. *October*, Volume 110. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. p. 66. In reference to E. Laclau and C. Mouffe (1985) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London, Verso.

their own utopias – and so this metaphor is a useful place to enter into my research on place of conflict within participatory practices. To do this, it is important to define what is meant by ‘conflict’ and in what form – and through which definition – I am codifying ‘conflict.’

4.2 The Personal Is Political – Conflict in Context

In contrast to this intellectualised understanding, I present my own personal understanding of conflict. The following was written by my mother. I had asked her to clarify my memory of an event that took place in April 1979, near the end of the civil war in what was then Rhodesia and now Zimbabwe. This was complex historical event that was emblematic of decolonisation in Africa in the latter part of the 20th Century.⁵ Ostensibly – and simplistically – the civil war is traced back to UK Prime Minister Harold Macmillan’s ‘Winds of Change’ speech, given to the Parliament of South Africa in February 1960. It hinted at the UK government’s desire to grant independence and universal suffrage to its British Territories in Africa, including Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. The ruling white party under Ian Smith rejected this policy that would unseat his government and unilaterally declared independence from Britain, seeking other allies abroad to sustain the power dynamics the local ruling classes had established. The act also enflamed already simmering racial tensions that were also gaining international prominence, including a nascent civil rights movement in USA, not to mention the revolutionary ties that those seeking an end to white rule had forged with communist nations including Cuba, China and the Soviet Union. Thus, the ‘Independence War’ (a contested and contentious term) reflected wider, global and political experiences. I had been born in Zimbabwe to European parents, and my father was in the Rhodesian Security Services, allied to Ian Smith’s white-ruled Government who against the ‘guerrillas’ (or ‘fers,’ short for ‘terrorists’ – another contentious and contested term) who were, in their own right, seeking independence from Smith, as well as from Britain. I was four years old at the time.

We lived in a town called Umtali (now Mutare). It was a lovely, sleepy, green little place nestled in the shadow of mountains that formed the border between Rhodesia (as it was then) and Mozambique. The guerrillas who were fighting for independence, had bases in Mozambique. The Independence War dragged on for years – this incident must have been near the end of the war.

We lived in a house right under the mountain. We had three lush treed acres with free range chickens (which disappeared one by one), a large rabbit hutch (which we called Rabbit Hotel that Daddy had built), four fairly enormous dogs – well – three fairly enormous dogs and Tramp – a servants’ quarters, and a venomous green mamba in the bamboo grove that flourished next to the stream that ran east to west across the property. You and [your brother] both had long hunting knives that were probably as long as your little thighs. We encouraged you to use those knives safely, to make fires to cook on all by yourselves and to build forts with the next door neighbour’s boys. You also had pellet guns to shoot at targets (never at birds!). We never had a moment’s worry about you both. I taught at the Girls’ Reform school and Daddy was a Captain in the signals corps with the HQ in the town centre. We lived in happy oblivion to the turmoil in the country – I loved my life, my children, and my husband.

One night there was what I can only describe as a sonic boom. The glass windows in the living room and those high up in the hall shattered. Daddy

⁵ For further information, see J.A. Kalley, E. Schoeman & L.E. Andor. (1999) *Southern African Political History: A Chronology of Key Political Events from Independence to Mid-1997*. Connecticut, USA. Greenwood Publishing Group.

and I were roused from a sound sleep and in an instant we were dressing in the clothes we kept ready for such emergencies, and both running to your and [your brother's] bedroom and the booming sounds went on. Luckily, your bedroom was on the other side of the house to the lounge and your windows had remained intact. You were both suddenly awake as well, and scrambling out of bed – it had all happened very quickly. *Hurry Hurry – get into the hall.* We pulled a mattress off one of the beds, and used it as a shelter over us, by leaning it at an angle against the wall in the hall (the only relatively enclosed space in the house). I pulled you both into my lap, Daddy put his arms around us all and we sat there on the floor, in a huddle – expecting each moment to be our last. Loud bangs and then the answering *ratatatatat* from weapons on our side started to answer back. My teeth were chattering with fear. [Your brother], typically needing the facts, said "Mummy, are we going to die?" and you bravely answered, "No, silly, God is looking after us." Which caused us all to giggle and relax a bit. Ever the optimist – even at 4 years old!

I think we must have remained huddled there for a while, my head nearly in my lap as I tried to make us as small a target as possible. I was wondering where the dogs were and how Obert and Margaret, the workers, were. It turned out that the dogs (except Fud) had fled to the servants' quarters down the end of the garden, and they all huddled there waiting for the end. The dogs vibrating in fear of the loud noises. Except Fud who had leapt up onto the spare wheel on front of Daddy's army Land Rover, expecting to join the action.

When there was a lull Daddy had to leave and go to HQ – but we couldn't stay there in the house. On the opposite side of the road the family had built an underground bunker, lined in concrete. Daddy and I each picked one of you up and we dashed outside and down the dark drive and across the road. It hardly registered that my car was a complete wreck – hit by a mortar and twisted metal. The shelter was next to their pool – which looked very pretty in the moonlight. We ran along the side of the pool and deposited you into the bunker. You both hop skipped down the stairs. You both had red tartan dressing gowns and slippers on. Her children had made their way to the bunker, but Sue, the neighbour was nowhere to be seen. "Where's Mummy?" I asked. "She locked herself in the loo and refuses to come out." Daddy left to drive through the dangerous dark streets to HQ after dislodging a reluctant Fud, and I ran indoors to plead with Sue to come out. I grabbed a bottle of wine from her kitchen shelf as we made our way out, and while the children laughed down in the cold, concrete bunker, playing "Snakes and Ladders", Sue and I sat on the steps of the bunker, watching the tracers from "our side" fly into the sky like well-trained fireworks, drinking Chardonnay as if being attacked by mortars was an everyday occurrence.⁶

This story illustrates various different aspects of conflict: the global conflict of different nationalities with vested interests; the political conflict of colonisation and its after-shocks, the social and cultural conflicts between the white and black Zimbabweans; the active bombing that trace the arc of actual physical manifestations of conflict in the form of war; the social conflicts between the (black) workers and the (white) employers the inter-personal conflicts of gender roles colliding as my father left my mother on her own; the intra-personal conflict of a parent's need to protect their children measured against her own safety; my imagined-memory of this event conflicting with the 'reality' as experienced by someone older. Within the story, there are also the various

⁶ Personal Correspondence from Ann Schrag-Saunders to author, June 2014.

responses to conflict – the aggression of the mortar strikes; the defence of hiding under a mattress; the counter-strike of Fud barking into the dark towards the firing guns; the duty of being called to HQ; the necessity of protection in bomb shelters; hiding; humour; just getting on with life, the way children often continue on with the business of life by playing games, which are themselves, another type of conflict.

This singular experience reveals multiple facets of ‘conflict’ – national, local, personal, political, conceptual, ideological, social, and inter-personal – making a singular definition difficult to extract. This text explores the terrain of conflict in order to situate my practice contextually and hone the precise type of ‘conflict’ my research addresses. It touches upon notions of conflict that sit outside of fine art and are important to examine as participatory practices exist within a broader social sphere, rather than the ‘art world’ alone. The next section of this text explores the general place of conflict within the world, followed by biological and sociological theories that build to a specific definition of conflict, as well as a brief overview of the historical position of conflict in order to give grounding to the subsequent section.

4.3 Natural Conflict

From a historical perspective, the discussion of conflict within human society is well documented. The philosophers Plato, Aristotle, More, Hobbes, Hume and Rousseau – to name a few – have all written texts similarly exploring the eradication – or management – of conflict. Plato’s *Republic* (320 BCE) attempted, via reason, to eradicate inter-social conflict by advocating his notions of ‘harmony and virtue’; Aristotle espoused a unitary society, and one based on non-conflicting relationships of community and politics; Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516) creates a world based on reason and justice wherein conflict is subsumed by rationality. David Hume attempted to create a politically conflict-free society in his *Idea of A Perfect Commonwealth* (1754) by proposing a “form of government, to which [he] cannot, in theory, discover any considerable objection”⁷ which consists of mandates and dictates that a government should employ in order to create a conflict-free society.⁸

The most often cited contribution within the historical framework on human beings and conflict are the differing perspectives of Hobbes and Rousseau. Rousseau, through his concept of the Noble Savage, suggests that humankind was, at base, a ‘Noble Savage’ (“nothing could be more gentle”⁹) whose conflicts only arose from the state of civilisation with ‘unnatural’ laws that were contrary to his/her psyche. Hobbes, in contrast, saw that life was “nasty, brutish and short”¹⁰ and that “Men are in that condition which is called war; and such a war as is of every man against every man.”¹¹ Hobbes saw conflict as a natural aspect of our existence on this planet, and it was only our civilised society that kept us from a spiralling descent into permanent conflict. It is ironic that both of these definitions of conflict now stand in conflict with each other, and this example of meta-narrative of conflict – notions of conflict in conflict with each other – gives us an opportunity to reflect upon the plethora discussions upon the subject, and there are indeed a variety of schools of thought to which we can turn to define conflict, either via the social or physical sciences. However, there is a through line between all of these schools that defines conflict, broadly, as ‘forces in opposition.’

From a ‘hard’ sciences point of view, for example, P.C.W. Davies, explores conflict considering the entirety of the universe and its inherent conflictual violence. In his text

⁷ D. Hume. [1754] *Idea of A Perfect Commonwealth* in G. Claeys (1994) *Utopias of the British Enlightenment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 55 – 70.

⁸ My personal favourite dictate – and also the least explained of his suggestions – is that: “The first year in every century is set apart for correcting all inequalities.” Ibid.

⁹ J.-J. Rousseau. [1755] (2013) *Discourse on Political Economy*. London: Stonewall Press.

¹⁰ T. Hobbes [1651] (1976). *Leviathan*. Charleston, South Carolina: Forgotten Books. p. 409.

¹¹ Ibid.

Life In A Violent Universe (2006)¹² he makes an argument that the universe's conflictual, opposing forces that manifest themselves so ferociously are important to its very existence (and the existence of everything within the universe, including life itself) as creative forces: "Violence is the leitmotif of the universe. It was born in a big bang. Its fundamental structure was forged in the... searing maelstrom of ferocity."¹³ He describes the conflicting and violent forces that form stars, the supernovae that slough off the shell of stars in horrifically massive atomic explosions, the war-like forces of gravity that tear and shear and undo moons and stars, and the force of asteroids that split apart planets with violent impacts. Yet, it is the same forces of supernovae that provide the atoms that can make our environments possible; the ache of gravity that gives us habitats and the asteroids' impacts that instigated life. The violence of conflict, he argues, is an essential characteristic of the universe, and the (conflicting) forces of nature shape and sustain our physical world.

His definition of conflict is one of forces acting upon each other, and indeed even the etymology of the word 'conflict' – deriving from the Latin *conflictus*, which is the past participle of *confligere*, meaning "struck together, fought"¹⁴ – suggesting that 'conflict' always contains forces that are in friction with each other. Additionally, another hard science – mathematics – also bonds conflict with friction and has equations – the Coefficient of Friction – to chart the relative friction of bodies/forces in conflict and the resistance encountered by such contact, examining friction as: "*the resistance that one surface or object encounters when moving over another*"¹⁵. Friction, away from the hard sciences, can also be defined as conflict or animosity "caused by a clash of wills, temperaments, or opinions,"¹⁶ and it is this definition that begins to move towards the realm of conflict of this research, as it points away from the abstracted and scientific explanation of the forces of conflict and the charting of what happens when they interact, and instead moves towards a definition that includes social and human interactions – the social sciences. The field of biology acts as a bridge between the two, and in a more biologically oriented text, *The Roots of Warfare*,¹⁷ Barry Cunliffe, begins his essay with a description of Stanley Kubrick's *2001 – A Space Odyssey* as a way of explaining his position on conflict:

One of his ape men picks up a long bone from a decaying animal carcass and uses it to bludgeon an opponent to death. In Kubrick's brilliant orchestration of this moment there is a palpable sense of awe... it is a defining moment – the beginning of man's progress to civilisation.¹⁸

While this introductory paragraph places the 'individual-in-conflict' within the context of 'civilisation', the rest of the text explores a biological perspective that aims to unpick an evolutionary understanding of conflict and place conflict as an essential characteristic of human biology. As the methodology of my research employs a physical mode of understanding, such a corporeal underpinning is resonant. Cunliffe argues that "the process of natural selection favoured the characteristics of aggression"¹⁹ in order to safeguard genetic imperatives, but also as ways of resisting stress, increasing genetic diversity and ensuring the survival of the fittest. Aggression leads to conflict, and thus a

¹² P.C.W. Davis, (2006) 'Life In A Violent Universe' in M. Jones & A.C. Fabian. (eds) (2006) *Conflict*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 156

¹⁴ 'Conflict' OED Online. September 2013. Oxford University Press. (Available online – Accessed 12 August, 2013)

¹⁵ 'Friction' OED Online. September 2013. Oxford University Press. (Available online – Accessed 12 August, 2013)

¹⁶ 'Friction' OED Online. September 2013. Oxford University Press. (Available online – Accessed 12 August, 2013)

¹⁷ B. Cunliffe. (2006) 'The Roots of Warfare' in M. Jones & A.C. Fabian. (eds) (2006) *Conflict*. Cambridge, Cambridge

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 63.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 70.

world in which aggression is favoured will be a world in which conflict is ever-present. This argument is mostly derived from studies of Chimpanzees, the closest human relative, and while there are flaws to this argument (we, as humans, are not chimpanzees and therefore we cannot wholly ascribe such a theory to ourselves) it does add clout to a working model of conflict that is innate to humanity from a biological perspective.

Similarly, in neurological studies of the brain, neurologist Simon Baron-Cohen postulates that humans are destined for a conflictual life due to the brain structures of the two sexes – and their incompatibility – thus conflict between them – is forged on a neurochemical level.²⁰ Far from being a derivative of the “*Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*”²¹ school of thought, this study explores the innate differences in the structure of our gendered brains, with males tending to develop larger frontal cortices which focus on logical and physical processes, and female brains tending to focus on those structures engaged in language and social relations.²² Also, while equally present in both males and females, the ‘male’ hormone testosterone can only pass the blood/brain barrier, where as the ‘female’ hormones such as oestrogen and progesterone cannot, and thus acts upon the genders differently. He is, it should be noted, emphatic that the studies are generalised and do not dictate essential gender narratives, but rather the “data require us to look at each individual on their own merits, as individuals may or may not be typical for their sex.”²³ That said, his research is compelling in describing a human world in which conflict is ever-present, due to our biology and the way that affects our social interactions. This work begins to form a basis of a world in which conflict is ineradicable, and in the same collection of essays, David Haig confirms that the gender differences both *within* and *between* gendered-brains also points towards, at least within studies in mice, a world with a very clear disposition towards conflict.²⁴ These scientific discussions are useful in that they entrench a theory that conflict – being the clash of two or more different power dynamics – is an essential part of human existence.

These texts, however, do little to explore what happens during conflict, and to place the argument in more relatable, day-to-day human terms. Johan Galtung (1958) developed an equation that frames a definition of conflict within a social construct:

Life is the pursuit of goals, social life is the exchange of value – and that which pursues values, and exchanges values, is referred to as an actor. In the pursuit he acts, and in the exchange he interacts; actors move along their life-lines, dotted with goal-consumption, culminating in goal-states. Occasionally the life-lines intersect: the actors come together in space and time, become relevant to each other and may engage in value-exchange or interaction; positive, neutral, negative. And this is, of course, where conflict enters... It is a property of social systems; then conceived of as a more or less interdependent systems of actors striving to achieve their goal-states. In the process it happens that they stand in each other's way, or so they may believe, and this is where the system becomes a conflict system... A conflict simply involves incompatible goals.... Conflict = Actors in Pursuit of Incompatible Goals.²⁵

²⁰ S. Baron-Cohen. (2006) ‘Sex Differences In The Mind’ in M. Jones & A.C. Fabian. (eds) (2006) *Conflict*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

²¹ J. Grey. (1992) *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*, New York, Harper Collins.

²² S. Baron-Cohen. (2006) ‘Sex Differences In The Mind’ in M. Jones & A.C. Fabian. (eds) (2006) *Conflict*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

²³ *Ibid.* p. 42.

²⁴ D. Haig. (2006) ‘Intrapersonal Conflict’ in M. Jones & A.C. Fabian. (eds) (2006) *Conflict*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

²⁵ J. Galtung. (1958) *Theories of Conflict: Definitions, Dimensions, Negations, Formations*. Columbia University. p. 24.

Galtung sets out comprehensive, logical (often mathematical) and accessible definitions of the place of conflict in the world which refer back to the clash of utopian notions via notions of 'pursuit of goals'. His extensive paper explores various aspects of conflict – exploitation, goal-interests, structural and inter-personal conflict, equity and equality and value – but most usefully to my research, he describes the two types of conflictual interactions within the world, which he calls the 'vertical' and 'horizontal'. Vertical interactions are described as those with unbalanced power dynamics (and involve exploitation, fragmentation and penetration) and the horizontal as those with more egalitarian modes of interactions (equity/a horizontal division of labour and equal consciousness-formation, and equal organisation-building). Each, he suggests can be both between individuals or collectives and:

the way it is conceived of here there is always conflict in the vertical relation because conflict is already built into the structure whereas conflict may come and go in the horizontal relation....The vertical structure has much more permanence, the horizontal structure is more eventful. For that reason they are best captured, analytically... [and have] been termed the structure-oriented and actor-oriented perspectives, discourses, intellectual frameworks, respectively.²⁶

These definitions of conflict – and his use of 'discourse' – allows the introduction of another useful framing device to understanding social conflict – that of Foucault. While Foucault is not the only theorist of discourse, he is most useful in his discussions of power within conflict. Discourse, of course, is a large field of study, as is Foucauldian analysis, but rather than undertake the entire weight of both these studies,²⁷ I borrow a few key notions about discourse and power that add to and augment Galtung's definition of conflict.

Above, Galtung suggests either a structural frame of conflict (the vertical 'Structure-Conflict' – i.e. social or systemic) or an individually driven one (the horizontal 'Actor-Conflict' – i.e. interpersonal) but I would suggest that the introduction of Foucault to these can elide these two distinct definitions. Conflict, in either form, is positioned on distinct power differentials – that of an individual, or that of the system – but in *Discourse* (1997), Sarah Mills distils Foucault's notion of power as being something that is more than merely a negative infringement on someone else's rights. Rather, she suggests Foucault's conceptualisation of power moves "away from this negative model towards a framework which stresses its productive nature, that it produces as well as represses."²⁸

In this understanding Galtung's Vertical and Horizontal structures become part of a larger discourse on power and conflict and to separate Galtung's definitions into distinct realms – the social or the interpersonal – disregards the opportunity to reveal the wider hegemonies at play in which the Vertical and the Horizontal intersect.

Unlike a Marxist notion of power that places the maintenance of power relations with the State and by the distribution of the access to the means of production, Foucauldian power does not have a monolithic focus, but a more diffuse maintenance: "I don't want to say that the State isn't important; what I want to say is that relations of power... necessarily extend beyond the limits of the state."²⁹ Mills clarifies this further to explained that viewing power in a Foucauldian sense

²⁶ Ibid. p. 26.

²⁷ Michel Foucault himself wrote: "All my books... are little tool boxes...if people want to open them, to use this sentence or that idea as a screwdriver or a spanner to short-circuit, discredit or smash systems of power, including eventually those from which my books have emerged... so much the better." (Cited in S. Mills. (1997) *Discourse*. London, Routledge. p. 15.

²⁸ S. Mills. (1997) *Discourse*. London, Routledge. p. 70.

²⁹ M. Foucault. (1979) *The Simplest of Pleasures* (trans M. Riegle & G. Bernadette) *Fag Rag*, 29:3. in S. Mills. (1997) *Discourse*. London, Routledge.

enables us to see power as a relation rather than a simple imposition. This relation involves more possible role positions than simply that of master-slave presupposed in the State power model. It also involves analysis of the degrees of power involved in the relation rather than an assumption that in any power relation there is simply a powerful participant and a powerless one...*Power is more a form of action or relation between people which is negotiated in each interaction and is never fixed and stable.*³⁰

As an example of how discursive views of social interactions (particularly conflict) can be useful, Mills uses gendered frameworks as examples to speak about negotiating one's presence in the world:

It is these discourses which heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual/transvestite [sic³¹] subjects engage with when coming to understand themselves as sexed: when a lesbian takes up a 'femme' position, it is her perception of the discourse of heterosexual femininity that she is actively modifying and reworking and ultimately destabilising."³²

In this instance, the discourse in the form of transgressing gender roles is a form of conflict iteration that reveals something about the iteration of power of gendered hegemonies in general. Similarly, Galtung's definitions are useful as they become descriptive of types of conflict, but a wider, discursive view of actors with goal-pursuits interacting with other actors with other goal pursuits can reveal the active power dynamics at play within the iterations of conflict. This is important for my research, as it reveals that power negotiations are a manifest part of human society, with negotiations of power being essential to human interactions.

To sum-up Galtung's contribution to this research, what is useful from his work is the understanding of conflict's shape, which he describes as the interaction where two or more actors/collectives (defined as those with '*Spielraum*' – sometimes called 'agency') with different goals or interests collide, resulting in interaction and value-exchange.

Bruno Lator's notion of the Actor Network Theory (ANT) is a useful contribution to mention in this discussion. I have mentioned this framework in previous chapters, but is useful to revisit here in that it reconfigures the social realm away from an identifiable, holistic, positivist entity, but a more knotted and conflictual framework in which agents/actors can hold plural and multiple identities that are not fixed and also rely on other agents/actors for that identity.³³ A highly complex sociological approach, ANT operates more as a tool "to better reveal the complexities of our sociotechnical world"³⁴ rather than a theoretic framework. In regards to this research, it does present some useful considerations regards to how it frames the social realm in regards to power. Two of the framework's authors write: ANT is "... not primarily concerned with mapping interactions between individuals...we are concerned to map the way in which they [actors] define and distribute roles, and mobilize or invent others to play these roles."³⁵

³⁰ S. Mills. (1997) *Discourse*. London, Routledge. p. 70. (Emphasis added).

³¹ This should read "transgendered" as this is preferred term to pre-operative transsexuals (not transvestite, which merely refers to the wearing of an opposing gender's clothes).

³² S. Mills. (1997) *Discourse*. London, Routledge. p. 73.

³³ Latour, B. (1996). "On Actor-Network Theory: A Few Clarifications" *Soziale Welt* in D. Cressman (2009) *A Brief Overview of Actor-Network Theory: Punctualization, Heterogeneous Engineering & Translation*. Vancouver: Simon Fraser University. ACT Lab/Centre for Policy Research on Science & Technology (CPROST) 2009.

³⁴ D. Cressman (2009) *A Brief Overview of Actor-Network Theory: Punctualization, Heterogeneous Engineering & Translation*. Vancouver: Simon Fraser University. ACT Lab/Centre for Policy Research on Science & Technology (CPROST) 2009.

³⁵ Law, John & Callon, Michel. (1988). "Engineering and Sociology in a Military Aircraft Project: A Network Analysis of Technological Change." *Social Problems*. Vol.35, No.3 pp.284-297 in *ibid.* P. 6.

It is therefore primarily concerned with a constantly changing and 'effected' social realm that is based on the interactions of others, and not only their interactions, but how each entity can persuade/mobilise/invent ways for other entities to enact their framework. This framework elides with Galtung's notions of incompatible goals, but adds to this an understanding of agency so that the actors are not just incompatible, but who are also actively aiming to reformat an 'opposing actor' to their world view. As mentioned before, ANT's framework is useful when considering the pluralistic social sphere, however, their emphasis on non-human objects and interest in scientific/technical realm place the framework out-with of this research's competency.

Combining the above theorisations, Galtung's theories and the biological imperative towards conflict reveals that conflict is an ineradicable process of human interactions; it is an active and flexible process, neither fixed nor stable (as per a Foucauldian understanding of power); and taking a discursive view of conflict can reveal systemic and hegemonic power structures. Drawing these notions together builds to a definition of conflict that I use for this research: *the iterations of power that occur when a self/group collides with an 'other' which challenge the certainty of our hegemonies and/or our place within the world.*

To return this to the context of participatory practices, briefly, it is important to highlight that practitioners not only participate with different actors/collectives, but also with funding institutions/supporting bodies, and additionally, participants interact with each other, as well as (often obliquely) the institution/supporting bodies. Each interaction within a participatory exchange therefore comes with varying value-exchanges, ergo various iterations of conflict. It is therefore vitally important to explore conflict within the realm of participatory practices. As I have alluded to above, participatory practices occur within society 'in general' and so I explore the sociological aspects of conflict below.

4.4 Society In Conflict

Sociology provides another edge of the frame of conflict and assists in understanding 'why' conflict with others is important within society. Conflict Sociologist Randall Collins writes:

The basic insight is that human beings are social but conflict-prone animals. Why is there conflict? Above all else there is conflict because violent coercion is always a potential resource, and it is a zero-sum sort. This does not imply anything about the inherence of drives to dominate; what we do know firmly is that being coerced is an intrinsically unpleasant experience, and hence that any use of coercion, even by a small minority, calls forth conflict in the form of antagonism to being dominated. ... The same argument may be transposed into the realm of social phenomenology. Each individual maximises his subjective status according to the resources available to him and his rivals. This is a general principle that will make sense out of the variety of evidence. By this I mean that one's subjective experience of reality is the nexus of social motivation; that everyone constructs his world with himself in it; but this reality construction is primarily done by communication, real or imaginary with other people; *and hence people hold the keys to each other's identities.*³⁶

Here, we begin to see that conflict – the iteration of actors in friction with other actors – is revealed as a system through which the actors can become the keys to another actors' identities, and vice versa. Writing about museums and galleries – subjects

³⁶ R. Collins. (1975) *Conflict Sociology: Towards An Explanatory Science*. San Francisco, Academic Press. p. 6. (Emphasis added).

closer to art – Victoria Hollows in her essay *the Performance of Internal Conflict and the Art of Activism* (2012) suggests that “open[ing] ourselves up to the possibility of alternative structures,³⁷ is an essential tactic in ethical and critical programming of contemporary arts. In other words, exposing oneself to alternative structures – other forces or other actors – might be a solution to many of the institutional problems faced by museums and galleries working within the participatory realm. She goes on to borrow from Bernadette Lynch, who wrote that: “Levinas claimed that, as relational beings, humans can only ever successfully learn about themselves through engagement with another.”³⁸ This builds to a concrete definition of conflict as being ineradicable, as being part of human social interactions, as being tied to actors in pursuit of goals, and of those actors colliding with other actors in pursuit of their own goals. Furthermore, it is this interaction that iterates how conflict can reveal the dynamics of power; within these iterations that human beings discover about themselves, and extrapolating from this, discover about the world around them. This obviously affects groups, as well as individuals.

There are three associations of conflict that must be addressed in order to further clarify my position: that of risk, violence and conflict resolution, discussed in reverse order. As my research question explores the productive elements of conflict, it would be antithetical to focus in any depth on conflict *resolution*, i.e. conflict’s eradication: I am interested in dissensus rather than consensus. Additionally, the study of conflict resolution takes up much of the current literature on conflict, and the majority of academic discussions about conflict are focused on the eradication or management of conflict, predominately via the sociological school of Conflict Studies. This study was formalised as a pedagogical activity in the 1960s and was particularly prevalent within the USA as a response to the global politics of the Cold War, the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights movement. It is a study that explores conflict resolution between those of different power differentials and focuses on the eradication of violence within the social sphere, and there are already many programmes, courses, schools, conferences and publications that explore this field.³⁹ Thus, I would have little to add to that already extensive debate and dialogue.

Additionally, there are a plethora of existing projects that elide conflict resolution and artistic practice. For example, the International Conference of Museums for Peace is an annual programme that, along with its academic discussions on peace and conflict resolution, arranges touring artworks and exhibitions that advocate “the promotion and stimulation of peace.”⁴⁰ In other artistic expressions, music and conflict resolution practices have been used within individual psycho-therapeutic sessions since the 1940s,⁴¹ but recently applied as “‘social music’ therapy”⁴² to advance peace: “the conflict transformation potential of music, [that] provides many examples where it has been used to promote peace, including the concert... uniting Israeli and Palestinian musicians.”⁴³ Within the theatrical tradition, Augusto Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed* has already been mentioned in Chapter 1, and while its emphasis was on the revolutionary potential of theatre, he also focused on ‘theatre from below’ which

³⁷ V. Hollows (2013) ‘The Performance of Internal Conflict and The Art of Activism’ in *Museum Management and Curatorship* 28:1. pp. 35 – 53 (Special Issue: *Working Through Conflict In Museums: Museums, Objects and Participatory Democracy*).

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 40.

³⁹ A glance at the current plethora of post-graduate and graduate programmes that offer Conflict Studies offers the following examples of the extent of this field: SOAS – University of London offers an ‘M.A. in Dispute and Conflict Resolution’; Kings College London offers an M.A. in ‘Conflict Resolution in Divided Societies’; and Columbia University offers an M.Sc. in ‘Negotiation and Conflict Resolution.’

⁴⁰ ‘Aims of the International Network of Museums for Peace’ (n.d.) www.inmp.net/aims. (Available online – Accessed 30 November 2014).

⁴¹ ‘History of Music Therapy’. (n.d.) www.musictherapy.org/about/history. (Available online – Accessed 30 November 2014).

⁴² O. Ramsbotham. (2011) ‘Conflict Resolution in Art and Popular Culture’ in T. Woodhouse, & H. Miall. (2011) *Contemporary Conflict Resolution (3rd Edition)*. Cambridge. Polity. pp. 347 – 358.

⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 349.

“captures the sense of invigoration that the political dimension of conflict resolution can gain by widening its horizons to engage with the creativity that is permanently available in the arts and popular culture.”⁴⁴ Within the participatory arts – much like the practice itself – examples are varied, and “might include creating a theatre project with youth in a post-conflict divided community, providing refugee communities a safe artistic space for creation and healing, and organising musical concerts to bring communities together in areas of conflict.”⁴⁵ While the form and methodologies of the work may differ, those that are interested in conflict resolution and the arts agree that there is “a place for the arts, sport and popular culture in conflict resolution as a means of energising the field by liberating the imagination and the emotions in pursuit of creativity in peacemaking.”⁴⁶

The aim of conflict resolution projects are indeed important goals and a peaceful, conflict-free world is obviously desirable, but I contend that aligning such projects with the conceptualisation of art that I have put forward is problematic. The ‘potential for transformation’ emerges via being confronted with a multitude of possibilities that are intended to unsettle and re-examine one’s own place in the world and this is an unending process because utopias are impossible. Put simply, conflict resolution aligns to developing social consensus and – as per the laid out arguments in previous chapters – art’s power lies in ability in creating *dissensus* within the everyday, social sphere. Additionally, most participatory projects do not occur within the war zones of extreme conflict that are the predominant focus of conflict resolution. Indeed, considering the UK, the country and society as a whole is not (officially) currently engaged in any such contexts, and most participatory practices occur within the everyday, social realm.⁴⁷ This is not to suggest that conflict resolution cannot be applied in these latter contexts, nor that conflict does not happen in the everyday social sphere – obviously, it does – only that the realm of art lies in the *dissensual possibilities* of the everyday social sphere; in the generative possibilities of conflict itself, rather than its eradication. To therefore align art to conflict resolution would be counter-productive as it collapses the very possibilities that art seeks to operate within. Indeed, this is very kernel of my argument.

The second association with conflict that needs to be addressed is violence. As Joan V Bondurant has suggested: “Violence [is] the primary mode of conducting conflict,”⁴⁸ and the material on violence and its relationship to conflict is extensive, but I would like to briefly discuss the parameters of violence that are applicable to this research. Of course, the definition of conflict which includes any actor interacting with another actor with different pursuit goals can refer to anything from the simplest disagreement between friends to full-scale genocidal war, and it is important to delineate the markers upon that continuum that bracket the appropriate definition.

Galtung’s description positions actors in an abstracted world without the inherent social dynamics and power structures that are the hallmarks of any ‘real’ society. Bourdieu’s and Galtung’s notion of a ‘field’ of society adds a more complex and ‘realistic’ view of this abstracted world of Galtung’s, as within the ‘field’ “individuals who confront one another will enter into conflict or competition with one another, each from a more or

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 351.

⁴⁵ C. Zelizer, (2008) ‘Integrating Community Arts and Conflict Resolution: Lessons and Challenges from the Field’ Community Arts Website, http://wayback.archive-it.org/2077/20100906203351/http://www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2007/06/integrating_com.php. 28 October, 2008. (Available online – Accessed 1 December 2015).

⁴⁶ O. Ramsbotham. (2011) ‘Conflict Resolution in Art and Popular Culture’ in T. Woodhouse, & H. Miall. (2011) *Contemporary Conflict Resolution (3rd Edition)*. Cambridge. Polity. pp. 347 – 358.

⁴⁷ Although many projects do seek to ameliorate ‘conflict’ between groups that elsewhere might be engaged in conflict (religious, ethnic, minorities etc.).

⁴⁸ J. V. Bondurant (2008) ‘The Search for a Theory of Conflict’ in J. V. Bondurant. (2008) *Conflict: Violence and Nonviolence*. New Jersey, Transaction Publishers, p. ix.

less advantageous position.”⁴⁹ This is closer to the model of conflict that I am interested in as it takes into account both the complex world of an interactive society with many different actors and power dynamics, but also that the individuals within that world are active agents who are capable of both resisting and reinforcing the dominant hegemonies. In other words, each actor’s hegemony within the social field is complex, formed in relation to and in resistance to the dominant forces. The ‘violence’ within Bourdieu’s field takes the form of non-physical violence (i.e. social interactions) that refers to the various modes of social/cultural domination. It does not specifically refer to physical violence of abuse, of actual wars, nor repressive regimes, though these will, of course, have other forms of symbolic violence at play within them.

Exploring notions of violence within a Bourdieuan iteration of a social sphere is useful to the framing of conflict in this text, as it suggests that “the violence which is exercised upon a social agent [is] with his or her complicity.”⁵⁰ In other words, the violence that is enacted and received in social forms by individual agents is consensual, to some degree. It is this ‘consensual violence’ that I am interested within conflictual artworks. To expand on Bourdieu, the symbolic violence in the form of social interactions between alternative hegemonies are those sorts of interactions from which one could extricate oneself from, but one chooses not to. The reasons for this could be as varied as a masochistic enjoyment of the experience, to a desire to prove one’s hegemony as correct (or to disprove another’s), or a commitment to agonistic politics, or even just an interest in finding something new. Any of these reasons could be the products of a conflictual participatory artwork, and are the manifestations of the generative powers of conflict, and so will be as manifold and diverse as each individual situation. It is the act, however, of being a willing participant engaging in various forms of symbolic violence that contributes to the definition of conflict used within this research.

In contrast to this, and importantly, I do not explore ‘non-consensual’ violence – i.e. the violence (particularly physical violence) that eradicates the ability of the actor to ethically and freely interact with other actors and engage in the equal and ethical comparison of hegemonies. These systems close down the possibility of egalitarian exchange that is essential to an ethical participatory exchange. This is not to suggest that I deny the critical importance of work in the vein of Santiago Serra, to whom I have alluded in previous chapters, works such his can be said to be *about* oppression and violence, and his application of violence highlights the viewer’s complicity in enacting a capitalist violence and oppression on non-western countries. Such works undoubtedly have political, aesthetic and social resonance. However, as this research explores a ‘consensual violence’ within the participatory arts, I focus on that which can emerge from egalitarian and ethical exchanges between actor/actor groups.

This ‘consensual violence’ relates to the final aspect of conflict – that of ‘risk.’ Here, I am not defining risk in the economic nor traditional sense – that of “a mode of thinking in which the costs and benefits of specific actions and discrete events are weighted in the balance”⁵¹ – but rather via a more broad and populous definition. Ian Wilkinson writes: “at the level of popular understanding and cultural commentary the concept of risk tends to be used as a synonym for ‘danger’ or ‘hazardous uncertainty’.”⁵² It is this ‘hazardous uncertainty’ that is important to my definition of conflict, as it relates to the possibility of another actor’s hegemony supplanting one’s own. I propose that this is the conflictually participatory artwork’s ‘capital’ – and an artwork without risk cannot truly present an alternative hegemony, nor the comparison and/or collision of those alternative world orders. This is another example of the ‘potential for transformation’

⁴⁹ E. B. Weininger. (2005) ‘Pierre Bourdieu on Social Class and Symbolic Violence’ in E. O. Wright. (2005) (ed.) *Approaches to Class Analysis*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

⁵⁰ P. Bourdieu & L. J. D. Wacquant. (2002) *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago. University of Chicago Press.

⁵¹ I. Wilkinson. (2010) *Risk, Vulnerability and Everyday Life*. New York, Routledge. p. 22

⁵² *Ibid.* p. 24.

mentioned in previous chapters, as it is via this interaction that the artwork can expose different iterations of the world and leave the actor with the potential for transforming her/his own world on his/her own terms. If an artwork is without this 'hazardous uncertainty,' it cannot contain this potential for transformation, as it is not postulating anything new. 'Alternative structures' after all, are those structures that are not our own (different actors), and without exposing ourselves to them and the inherent 'hazardous uncertainty' of the unknown (the 'uncertain') and the 'hazards' of exploring an alternative hegemony to our own, we cannot be exposed to those elements that – as I define above – challenge the certainty of our hegemonies and/or our place within the world. Thus, conflict must contain 'risk' as risk is 'new knowledge.'

The relationship of risk and conflict to participatory practices is important to unravel. In a chapter entitled "The Context of Risk" sociologist Ian Wilkinson states that "focus on shared experiences and expressions of risk provides insights into the distinctive character of contemporary social life...[suggesting] that 'risk' is now the organising principle of society, as well as the *overriding preoccupation of our political culture*."⁵³ Additionally, he goes on to explain: "a more emotively laden conception of risk is deployed as a *governmental strategy designed to encourage people to adopt precautionary measures*."⁵⁴ Risk has therefore become a political preoccupation, and it is apparent that 'health and safety' legislation has become fused into local governance in order to mitigate the unknown elements that emerge out of 'risk'. Any governmental – or institutional – participatory projects are similarly bound by such 'health and safety' limitations, and this places limits on the possibilities of the art works. In the context of participatory *art*, these 'precautionary measures' are however antithetical to risk – i.e. they deny the experience that provides new insights. In these terms, a project that aims to eradicate risk could be read in alignment with Rancière's *The Ethical Turn* (2004) where he described the rise of a consensual social/political sphere that promoted "the identification of all forms of discourse and practice under the same indistinct point of view."⁵⁵ The denial of the force that provides new knowledge and different forms of discourse – risk – is employed in order to collapse the social sphere into a consensual, political sphere. Any participatory project that denies risk and conflict can be seen to be compromised as *art*, and has become instrumentalised in the service of other governmental remits. In contrast, a conflictual, risky participatory art project has the possibility of being both ethical, as well as aesthetically critical.⁵⁶

4.5 The Art of Conflict

In order to contextualise these discussions on conflict, violence and risk within an artistic sphere it is useful to consider artworks that illustrate different aspects of conflict and their function within the social realm. This includes works that are both successful in their conflictual approach, and those that are not. Exploring these works helps clarify the ethical and critical dimension of conflictual participatory artworks.

The first example is an artwork by Rebecca Gomperts called *Women On The Waves* (1999 to present). Similar to *Legacy...* (2009), the *Women On The Waves* (WOW) project occurs at the intersection of location and policy. WOW is:

an activist/art organisation founded in 2001 by physician Rebecca Gomperts. The small nonprofit group [sails around] the coasts of countries where abortion is illegal in a boat designed by Atelier Van Leishout that

⁵³ Ibid. p. 15. (Emphasis added).

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 24. (Emphasis added).

⁵⁵ J. Rancière. (2006) 'The Ethical Turn of Aesthetics and Politics' *Critical Horizons* 7:1 in *Malaise dans l'Esthétique*. Paris: Galilee. 2004. pp. 143 – 173.

⁵⁶ The word 'risk' itself probably derives from the Arabic word '*risq*' which means *riches* or *good fortune* and I find it fitting to this study that such a dangerous, unwelcome notion actually stems from something quite positive, and would argue for a return to this understanding of the concept.

housed a functioning abortion clinic. Gomperts and her crew would then anchor in international waters – since the boat was registered in The Netherlands, they operated under Dutch law – to provide abortion services to women legally and safely.⁵⁷

On the surface, this work seems to fit all the criteria of a 'conflictual' artwork in that it involves actor groups with alternative hegemonic orders colliding/comparing, in this case over the reproductive rights of women. However, I would like to present this work as a 'failed' conflictual work. (The notion of 'failure,' I recognise, is contentious, but in this instance I am rating the work against the criteria of a conflictual artwork set out above.) The reason it fails is simply because it has a political agenda: to provide reproductive health services for those who cannot receive them in their own country legally. From a personal perspective, I applaud such attempts and such politics elides with my own personal views. However, from an artistic perspective, I argue that having a political agenda attempts to control another actor's/actor group's transformation. In this instance, the work suggests that all countries *should* have the same laws as The Netherlands. It does not provide new subjectivities as binary hegemonies – those that provide abortion services and those that don't – have not been challenged into being anything other than oppositional forces, which they already were. If WOW had never provided the services, but existed as a possibility that *could* provide these services, it would then exist as a conflictual possibility – a sort of potential and alternative politics, floating offshore, almost imminent. They do, however provide abortion services and this takes the work into a the realm of the politics, and as such, I would place this work under the category of 'activist art.'

Activist art – or radical art – has as many manifestations as any other kind of art, but has a through-line that argues for political necessity for artists working within the public realm to critique dominant forces in favour of more ethical (read: liberal) manifestations of social power structures. This is an instrumentalised approach that places art in the employ of specific agendas, and I suggest that this instrumentalised approach is as problematic as the instrumentalisation of artworks via governmental policy as discussed in the previous chapter. In other words, both a neoliberal approach (for example, by New Labour) or a leftist approach (for example, by WOW) are attempts at social engineering, and the only difference lies in a different political endpoint. Both positions presents a utopian hegemony that is *necessary* to implement: one at the cost of the other. In this sense, by actually providing abortions (rather than symbolically presenting the potential) WOW merely represents the binary systems as they stand, rather than exploring the political realm of these two systems of belief, and how they function. The act of engaging in abortions collapses the possibility of revealing different potentialities between the different perspectives.

The political nature of participatory artworks is a central tenant to this research, and participatory artworks and politics are inseparable because the practice occurs in public, with people, exploring political topics and dealing with real human lives. The potentiality for to affect politics is therefore great: As Mouffe suggests "Public spaces [are] the battleground in which different hegemonic articulations are confronted. They are plural, always striated and not smooth. Where there is no undetermined sense of unity: there always exists a multiplicity of struggle."⁵⁸ There is therefore neither a single 'public' nor a single manifestation of hegemonies. *How, to what extent, and for whom* participatory projects become politicised becomes of salient concern, and this is especially relevant in current history writing that is occurring regarding this genre as it becomes further entrenched in the institutional frameworks of Art.

⁵⁷ N. Thompson (2012) 'Living As Form' in N. Thompson. (2012) *Living As Form: Socially Engaged Art 1991-2011*, Cambridge, Mass. Creative Time Books.

⁵⁸ C. Mouffe. (2007) 'Agonistic Politics and Artistic Practices' (Lecture) Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow, 2nd March.

Creative Time's publication *Living As Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991 – 2011* (2012) is an example of an attempt to mythologise a certain kind of form of 'relational art.' Nato Thompson – a curator at Creative Time as well as editor of the book – writes the introductory essay that traces the emergence of Socially Engaged Practices⁵⁹ as a resistance to the rising politics of Neoliberalism, the Spectacle of the Internet, and the general push towards Global Capitalism. For him – and a large selection of practitioners included in this seminal publication – there is an imperative to use art as a tool to critique certain power structures:

It is upon this stage of spectacle that we must attempt to create meaningful relationships and actions... Without understanding that the manipulation of symbols has become a method of production of the dominant powers in contemporary society, we cannot appreciate the forms of resistance to that power that come from numerous artists, activists and engaged citizens.⁶⁰

In the above quote, the key word is 'resistance' as it reveals an alliance to a political and activist art approach. The artworks that are listed are a litany of projects that Thompson *et al* at Creative Time suggest are worth historicising as prime examples of the genre of participatory practices, and include, among others:

- 1) Barefoot Artists: The Rwanda Healing Project (2004 – present): an on-going, "multi-faceted programme of cultural activities *as well as economic and environmental development efforts* operated by and for village residents" which helps them "grieve, cope and ultimately, recover from their losses."⁶¹
- 2) Tania Bruguera: Immigrant Movement International (2011 – present): a "flexible community space... [that focuses] on *immigration reform*...examining growing concerns about the political representation and conditions facing migrants" within the USA,⁶²
- 3) Finishing School: The Patriot Library (2003): a "nomadic collection of books, periodicals, and *other media deemed potentially dangerous* by the [USA] federal government once the Patriot Act took effect after the acts of terrorism on September 11, 2001."⁶³
- 4) Helena Producciones: Festival De Performance De Cali (1998 – present): a festival that "provided a forum for both emerging and established international artists to *create performances that were interactive and politically motivated*" in Cali, Columbia.⁶⁴
- 5) Land Foundation: The Land (1998 – present): a continuing project initiated by Rirkrit Tiravanija and Kamin Lertchaiprasert which cultivates and experiments with "*notions of utopian, socially responsible living*... a test ground for mediation and ideas that ... call for self-sufficiency, sustainable practices and natural resources."⁶⁵

The emphasised texts in the quotes above – "economic and environmental development efforts," "immigration reform," "other media deemed potentially dangerous," "create performances that were interactive and politically motivated," and utopian, "socially responsible living" – all point towards an instrumentalisation of the practice towards a political bent, specifically a leftist agenda, rather than the works existence as a dissensual artwork. Indeed, the publication itself historicises this kind of

⁵⁹ He uses this term quite specifically being those practices that are concerned with politics, and this becomes an important distinction later in my research on the 'role of the artist'.

⁶⁰ N. Thompson (2012) 'Living As Form' in N. Thompson. (2012) *Living As Form: Socially Engaged Art 1991-2011*, Cambridge, Mass. Creative Time Books. p. 251.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 114.

⁶² Ibid. p. 121.

⁶³ Ibid. p. 154.

⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 170.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 180.

political work by including them in such a publication, and in doing so, co-opts the practice of 'working with people' into a limited and simplistic sphere of a binary, political relationship. Such a binary between the left and the right reinforces each other's version of utopia via oppositional power-dynamics. It also replicates the social-engineering strategies that those on the left seem so intent on combating.

These projects could indeed be considered 'conflictual' projects, however, are conflictual in aid of specific endpoint: a leftist (consensual) utopia. By this, I mean that the arguing for *activism-based* conflictual artwork turns the arena of the social (and the 'artistic') into a competition between one version of utopia and another. It does not reveal the actual power structures at play, but merely replicates the dynamics. Nor does it reveal new subjectivities, but only reinforce the opposition that already exists. Politicising participatory practices reduces them into a form of utopic activism that is concerned with 'politics' (in the Mouffian sense) rather than a critical questioning of the dominant hegemony. Again, I turn to Mouffe who suggests that one should:

not see politics and art as separate spheres. It is not useful. Artist practices play a role in the maintenance, reconstruction and formation of a given symbolic order – of a hegemony – or in its challenge. And therefore it necessarily has a political dimension. Therefore, it is not useful to use the term "political" for [artworks] that challenge an order because a practice which challenges this order is also political. They all contribute to hegemonies. The real concern is the possibility of *critical art*. The different ways that artistic practices can contribute to the questioning of the dominant hegemony.⁶⁶

The questioning of dominant hegemony via critical art is the essence of a conflictual participatory art practice. An 'activist' approach merely reiterates politics: they do not reveal the shape of the political, whereas a conflictual one questions and provides new subjectivities regarding the dominant hegemony.

This suggestion might be aligned with Markus Meissen and his book the *Nightmare of Participation*⁶⁷ which similarly argues for the strategy of the 'cross-bench politician' (the non-party specific independents within the House of Lords of the British Parliament) where the artist should become a non-aligned, independent and 'third' position in a binary political system. He, rather obliquely, argues that such a practice critiques the binarisation the politics, and gives potential for other readings. However, I do not align myself with his approach, either, because his strategy argues for a criticality of such systems of politics, rather than a revelation of broader political hegemonies: he argues from within system of politics via this independent 'third' way, but – crucially – it is still within the system. While I think this can be a useful strategy, it is limited in its scope in its 'potential for transformation' as it only offers a critique of the binarisation, rather than a broader view of hegemonies at play that instigate/reinforce those binaries.

An approach that does effectively expose the limitations of liberal western politics is Christoph Schlingensief's *Please Love Austria* (2000). In this work, Schlingensief (1960 – 2010) presented a shipping container rigged with webcams that contained 12 illegal immigrants which the public could 'vote out' via the Internet. The project lasted six days and was situated in the heart of Vienna as part of the 2000 Vienna International Festival. Described as a 'reality TV event' by Schlingensief himself, the project is explained on his website:

⁶⁶ C. Mouffe. (2007) 'Agonistic Politics and Artistic Practices' (Lecture) Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow, 2nd March. (Emphasis added).

⁶⁷ M. Meissen. (2010) *The Nightmare of Participation: Crossbench Praxis as a Mode of Criticality*, Berlin, Sternberg Press.

Amid intense public interest, twelve participants introduced by Schlingensiefel as asylum-seekers spend one week in a cordoned-off, CCTVed shipping container complex next to the Vienna opera house. Blue flags representing Austria's far-right populist FPÖ party are hoisted on top of a container.

As onlookers applaud ambiguously, a sign bearing the slogan "Ausländer raus" ("Foreigners out") is unveiled and then attached to the container together with the logo of the Kronenzeitung, Austria's biggest-selling tabloid. Excerpts from speeches by FPÖ chairman Jörg Haider resound across Herbert-von-Karajan-Platz. With clear references to the BIG BROTHER TV show, the Austrian population are asked to phone in and vote out inhabitants, the two least popular of which are ejected each day. Votes can also be cast via the Internet, where Webfreetv broadcasts events from the container live – 24 hours a day for a period of six days.

The square is regularly visited by high-profile "patrons" such as acclaimed writer Elfriede Jelinek and political figures Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Gregor Gysi, who then obligingly provide status reports.

Every morning at eight o'clock, two residents are ejected from the container to be deported to their native country. The winner can look forward to a cash prize and the prospect, depending on the availability of volunteers, of Austrian citizenship through marriage.⁶⁸

Schlingensiefel himself played ringleader to this circus, standing next to or on-top of the counter with a megaphone and inviting people to participate in voting out who they felt was not worth being a citizen, interviewing political leaders, and interacting with the large crowds that gathered outside the container that either admired or denounced the 'installation' depending on their own personal politics. A group of activists attempted to break into the container to 'free' the immigrants, and police were involved in several scuffles between the various political persuasions.

Crucially, however, the work never presented the politics as 'good' or 'bad,' but rather, instead, actively revealed them and, in this instance, Schlingensiefel problematized the dominant hegemony by revealing the alternative perspectives on the matter. He collapsed the politics and different ideological approaches of immigration into a singular spectacle that revealed, in visceral and telling manner, the structures of the politics, the relationship between the media and governmental policies, the nature of participatory democracy as well as an illustration "of the inextricable links between the stage-managed cynicism of TV and the objective cynicism of a society that judges asylum policy on the basis of its majority mandate while ignoring moral values."⁶⁹

Silvija Jestrovic, in the exhibition catalogue of a group show that contained the documentation of this work, writes of Schlingensiefel: "[This] work oscillates between being an effective new form of politically engaged art and a spectacle of simulated reality that, no matter how fierce the response, reproduces what it set out to scrutinise."⁷⁰ The tension that emerges from revealing the politics gives a structure to the work, which gives it a salience and power not present in activism art, because it does not present a singular, utopic vision. It presents utopian visions in friction with each other, and neither presents a solution nor suggests a specific way forward, but

⁶⁸ J. Jessen. (n.d.) 'Please Love Austria' http://www.schlingensiefel.com/projekt_eng.php?id=t033 (Available online – Accessed 2 December, 2014).

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ S. Jestrovic. (2008) 'Performing Like An Asylum Seeker: Paradoxes of hyper-authenticity in Schlingensiefel's Please Love Austria'. C. Bishop & M Sladen. (eds) (2008) *Double Agent*, Exhibition Catalogue, 14 February 2008 – 6 April 2008, Institute of Contemporary Art, London, UK. p. 23.

rather allows the actor/actor groups to collide and engage in value-exchange, which in turn provides the potential for transformation to the viewer/participant. This notion of equal, opposing and conflicting utopias that are held in tension is vitally important to a conflictual participatory practice as it provides not only ethical engagement, but also mechanisms through which to provide the potential for transformation: to think differently about the issue in non-binary ways.

Claire Bishop points out the irony that Schlingensiefel's 'fake' detention immigration centre caused more discussion and debate about the issues of immigration with the citizens of Vienna than the existence of a real immigration detention centre, only a few kilometres away from this spectacle. This, Bishop suggests, was because the artwork as a spectacle and aesthetic proposal retains more power than the actual, real life experiences.⁷¹ Her argument for this lies within the Rancièrian understanding of the relationship between aesthetics and politics.

Rather than considering the *work of art* to be autonomous, [Rancière] draws attention to the autonomy of our *experience* in relation to art... The aesthetic for Rancière therefore signals an ability to think contradiction: the productive contradiction of art's relationship to social change, which is characterised by the paradox of belief in art's autonomy *and* in it being inextricably bound to the promise of a better world... in short the aesthetic doesn't need to be sacrificed on the altar of social change, because it always already contains this ameliorative promise.⁷²

Here, via Rancière, Bishop suggests that participatory artworks "must remain paradoxically autonomous *in order to* initiate or achieve a model for social change."⁷³ This rhetoric elides with the model of the conflictual artwork's 'potential for transformation' in that it suggests artworks) need to remain separate from specific politics in order to reveal the political. This position also demands art exist as a spectacle as separate from life that is "both at one remove from politics and yet already political because it contains the promise of a better world."⁷⁴ In this instance, rather than Schlingensiefel's work being an actual detention centre, the conflux of it being both a 'real' and 'mediated' experience at once confounds and conflates its problematic relationship to life: the conflict occurs between actors/actor groups due to its utopian proposition being unclear. It exists as a spectacle – something both *of life* but equally *separate* from it – and as such, offers the potential for transformation within the heart and mind of the perceiver because it is politically unresolved, and yet aesthetically certain – it is 'autonomous' and yet also at a 'remove from politics'. In other words, Schlingensiefel's work presents more of a political challenge than an actual detention centre due its autonomy from any specific political (utopian) position. As a conflictual participatory artwork, the social change it presents is ambiguous, and yet it most certainly suggests it: this is its success. The notion of art having the potential for social change, as discussed above, is not necessarily a false approach, only that, as Mouffe suggests, it is a question of "the possibility of *critical art*"⁷⁵ and "the different ways that artistic practices can contribute to the questioning of the dominant hegemony."⁷⁶ Conflict ensures a productive questioning of dominant hegemony.

The concept of conflict within participatory works stands in contrast to the ameliorative work advocated by Grant Kester which occupies "a realm of useful, ameliorative and

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² C. Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso. P. 29. (Emphasis original).

⁷³ Ibid. p. 27.

⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 29. (Emphasis original).

⁷⁵ C. Mouffe. (2007) 'Agonistic Politics and Artistic Practices' (Lecture) Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow, 2nd March. (Emphasis added).

⁷⁶ Ibid.

ultimately modest gestures, rather than the creation of singular acts that leave behind them a troubling wake.”⁷⁷ This ‘troubling wake’ can develop from an antagonistic approach within participatory practices: “Without antagonism there is only the imposed consensus of authoritarian order,”⁷⁸ and Bishop advocates antagonism and dissensus – i.e. conflict – to invoke this ‘troubling wake.’ This is an important aspect of the conflictual participatory practice I am advocating as it is within this troubling wake that the dominant hegemonies are revealed and where the ‘potential for transformation’ enters the heart and mind of the participant/audience. “Kester’s emphasis on compassionate identification with the other is typical of the discourse around participatory art, in which the ethics of interpersonal interaction comes to prevail over a politics of social justice.”⁷⁹ In other words, for Kester (according to Bishop) it is the relationship between participants that is important, whereas for Bishop, it is the aesthetics of the artworks themselves that contain the ‘promise of a better world’, and that is achieved via dissensus.

Kester’s notions immerse the participatory artwork into the everyday, seeking to “understand the dialogic as a form of aesthetic experience.”⁸⁰ He is concerned with the power hierarchies that can occur between artist/art institution and a wider public and so seeks to develop an aesthetic where the artist is “content to engage with the viewer as he or she actually is, here and now, through a process of collaborative interaction.”⁸¹ To do this, he places his understanding of participatory practices in a lineage of modern art, but simultaneously rejects this lineage due to what he suggests is an unequal power distribution between artist/art institution, art object and viewer and instead argues for an alternative approach that would: “require us to locate the moment of indeterminateness, of open-ended and liberatory possibility, not in the perpetually changing form of the artwork qua object, but in the very process of communication that the artwork catalyzes.”⁸² In other words, his aesthetic shifts the importance placed on an artwork away from the ‘things produced by artists’ to the experience that occurs because of these objects. (I expand the discussion on ‘spectacle’ and art objects in the following chapter on my physical methodology.) Kester looks towards sociologists and philosophers to define an aesthetics of communication, specifically Hans Herbert Kogler, to develop a framework of egalitarian dialogue that places the artist and the participant/viewer on an equal footing of “reciprocal elucidation”⁸³ – a position where the artist and the participant can learn from each other. This position is in contrast to what he refers to as an “orthopaedic approach”⁸⁴ wherein an external actor/actor group (i.e. an artist or an institution) pre-supposes his/her/its participants as somehow defective – be that aesthetically, culturally, spiritually – and whose goal is to raise up this participant to enlightened level. I have referred to this approach above in the *Legacy...* work above, and in that work, I designed a conflictual experience that challenged this ‘orthopaedic’ approach via re-positioning the power structures (geographically and socially). In doing this, I was able to place the institution and the social group on equal footing so they might find the potential for transformation in their conflict. The work did focus on the dialogic (‘experience’ rather than ‘objects’) but, crucially, it occurred differently to Kester’s dialogical approach in the sense that it was via *dissensus* within the aesthetic experience that both the institution and the social group found productive possibilities. In this regards, it was an amalgam of both Bishop’s ‘troubling wake’ and Kester’s egalitarian and dialogic approach.

⁷⁷ C. Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso. p. 27 and p. 23.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 25.

⁸⁰ G. Kester. (2004) *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press. p. 89.

⁸¹ Ibid. p. 88.

⁸² Ibid. p. 90.

⁸³ Ibid. p. 94.

⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 88.

In a final comment on Kester's approach, I concur with him that an 'orthopaedic' position is ethically problematic and also agree with his argument for an "emancipatory model of dialogic interaction"⁸⁵ that can affirm egalitarian dialogic aesthetics. However, considering the understanding of conflict above, artist or actor/actor groups that engage in this 'emancipation' approach are separate only in degrees from his rejected 'orthopaedic' approach. In other words, both an 'orthopaedic' or 'emancipatory' position suggest that the participant(s) are somehow lacking – either defective, or is somehow enslaved. Similarly, both positions suggest the artist actor/actor groups are able to provide something to the participant(s) that he/she needs, even despite an egalitarian, dialogic relationship. In this regard, neither assumes the capability of the participant actor/actor groups to be as he or she actually is, here and now. In order for ethical conflictual project to develop, a parity between institution, artist and participant is paramount and so reject the 'emancipatory' approach, instead leaning towards a Mouffian application of participatory practices that aims to "questioning of the dominant hegemony"⁸⁶ rather than assume participants need to be liberated from it. In other words, I am more interested in the emancipatory possibilities of the practice, rather than specifically the emancipation of involved participants.

4.6 Conclusion

If conflict is, as the theorists above suggest, an ineradicable attribute of the human society, and if participatory practices occur within society, working with actor/actor groups who are "in pursuit of Incompatible Goals,"⁸⁷ then participatory practices will invariably contain conflict. Ameliorative and instrumentalised projects that aim to eradicate conflict in favour of a consensual (Mouffian) political sphere therefore risk perpetuating dominant hegemonies in an unethical manner. In contrast, conflictual participatory projects, far from obliterating or eradicating conflict, explore the productive elements of conflict within participatory practices.⁸⁸

This includes the ethical and the political applications of the practice, as well as understanding in what ways it might – or might not – provide 'emancipation'. Additionally, as much of the work of participation occurs within the context of institutions and/or institutionally-funded projects with remits, end-points and outcomes, conflict can be employed to ensure an ethical situation wherein actor/actor groups can exchange their utopic world orders without defaulting to an oppressive consensual regime or a patronising 'orthopaedic approach,' and instead seek out alternative hegemonies. This is as true for institutions as it is for artists or any agent that chooses to 'work with people.'

The notion that utopic world orders are exchanged in order to explore the "unlimited possibilities of the morrow"⁸⁹ returns this chapter to Machiavelli and Jacoby in the understanding that conflict is an important aspect of seeking a better world. This understanding, however, calls for an awareness of how 'better' is being formulated, by whom and in the aid of what hegemony. This questioning of hegemonies is often the grist of my conflictual participatory practice and I explore this subject in greater depth in Chapter 6 that features an analysis the artworks developed during this research. These works were conducted via a physical methodology and I unravel this methodology in the following chapter.

⁸⁵ Ibid. p. 89.

⁸⁶ C. Mouffe. (2007) 'Agonistic Politics and Artistic Practices' (Lecture) Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow, 2nd March.

⁸⁷ J. Galtung. (1958) *Theories of Conflict: Definitions, Dimensions, Negations, Formations*. Columbia University. p. 24.

⁸⁸ This is not to suggest I am promoting an either/or dichotomy of these two approaches, but rather am emphasising the *intent* of participatory projects.

⁸⁹ R. Jacoby. (2005) *Picture Imperfect: Utopian thought for an Anti-Utopian Age*. New York, Columbia University Press. p. 146.

5. Physicality: A Methodology

5.0 Introduction

Since participatory art occurs within the social sphere, applying a physical framework within the practice is an effective methodology to employ because corporeal sensations are a shared touchstone between all humans. Unlike the nuances of language or culture – which are context specific – the body is a shared link, despite race, location, class or context, thereby making it the most effective media through which to form affective and relational bonds. Unlike traditional art practices – such as painting, drawing, sculpture, etc. – that rely on visual or traditionally aesthetic skills as well as specific knowledge of art, to formulate projects within a physical framework requires no preconceived knowledge and therefore has a more immediate, broader reach to diverse communities and individuals.

The chapter elucidates how and why physicality is a significant methodology through which to conduct conflictual participatory practices. I describe the philosophical underpinnings of my own physical methodology and show how this is a successful mechanism to both engage participants from diverse backgrounds and contexts, but also is a successful way to speak of the salient issues of the communities with whom one is working and with whom one is engaged in meaning-making via participatory art.

When we make sense of the world, it is rarely a positivistic, linear and rational narrative that neatly describes the process. Meaning is tacit and dynamic. It emerges from our complicated stories and experiences of the world. In this chapter, I trace my methodological, meaning-making processes from my personal history including a description of my childhood activities and how they influenced my current physical practice. The text then looks at the work I was making before I began my participatory practice and how they assisted in building a non-visual ontology to support my current methodology. It includes reference to the fields of Embodied Cognition and Anthropology, as well as an inquiry into the documentation of ephemeral acts implicit to physical acts.

5.1 Memory of Balance



Fig 5.1 *The Author as a child, balancing*, Ann Schrag, Polaroid Photograph, 1982

When I was 8, my family lived in Oman, on the Arabian Peninsula. We – like most white, Western families – lived in compounds of a few houses, surrounded by high, grey, breeze-block walls that separated our white, Western ways from the lives of the local Omani, the wandering Bedouin, the camel herder, his camels, the wild dogs, and the sprawling, hot, flat desert. These walls stretched in a perfect square around our homes, broken only by the large entry gap for the large, rickety gate that swung over the humped cattle-grid (in actuality: a ‘camel-grid’). I spent any free time I had on that wall, balancing and scampering around the perimeter, seeing how many times I could circumnavigate our boundary. I have always had excellent balance and I could run along the edge, sprinting as fast along the wall as I could on the ground. Barefoot, the bricks were rough and I can still remember the feel of them against my feet and the rush of the wind as I ran; then the sudden pull of deceleration as I slowed to turn a corner. My mother would sit nervously waiting for me to make a full rotation, coming back into view, and endlessly telling me not to fall. I never fell off. Sometimes I jumped, but I never fell.

From that vantage point, I could see both sides of the wall; I could see both worlds – the European world and the Arabic world. On one side, the blonde, permed hair of my mother contrasted with the black-clad *abaya*-covered women of the desert; the blocky, brick houses inside the compound opposing the fluid and flowing tents of the outside world; the cultural differences between the loud, brash socialising of my family and the respectful, comfortable silences of the Omani; the Sisyphean task of sustaining ordered, manicured gardens against the wild, natural scrubland and sand dunes. Balanced there on the wall – and balanced between those worlds – I could witness and understand the different ways of living and being in the world; see the clash and separation of hegemonies, and see the structures that divided. Importantly, this insight was reached via a physical process; it occurred because I was literally and *physically* in a different position.

In my current practice, I carry this mental image of my younger self balanced on that wall with me, because I find it applicable to my work, being that I am often balanced between groups (i.e. communities and institutions) and exploring the structures that divide. Consider, for example, the artwork mentioned in the introduction *Legacy...* wherein the potential for transformation was manufactured by eliding the differing situations (those of the Local Authority arts projects and the ‘real lives’ of the participants) into a single context via a physical experience (placing the Gallery of Modern Art’s boardroom table in the wasteland of the participants’ housing estate). The work functioned because it challenged a traditional physical experience and this approach runs through my most of my practice today. This is a physical reading of the world and its application to participatory artworks forms my methodological approach.

The image of me on that wall also acts as an entry point into a discussion on methodology, in that it describes what sort of practice I am engaged in, but also describes how I make my work. In other words, it explains the mechanisms by which I make sense of the world, but also the process by which I implement that meaning-making: via physicality and ‘the knowledge of the body’.

5.2 The Aesthetics of Physicality (Or: A Non-Visio-centric Ontology)

My route to becoming an artist has been rather circuitous, and I decided to follow this path after accidentally becoming an art teacher in Kuwait for a year. I had originally studied Creative Writing at the University of British Columbia, Canada, but after graduation (with a poetry book recently published, a novel in discussion for publication, and a serious amount of student-loan debt) I had gone to the Middle East to teach English in the hopes that I might find work for a year which could refill the coffers. I had secured an interview at the Kuwaiti English School for the position of an English teacher, and during the interview they noticed that my degree was a Bachelor of Fine

Arts (BFA), not English. They explained that they had many prospective English teachers, but no Art teachers, and would I, with my BFA, be interested in teaching art instead. My writing degree had indeed been conferred as a Fine Arts degree due to its focus on creative practice, but up until that point, I had never undertaken any art training, nor had had much experience with art, in general. In my desperation for employment, however, I decided sins of omission were less problematic than sins of commission, and with gallous desperation responded: “Yes. Sure. I can teach art. Yes.”

Suffice to say, it was far a more complicated year than I had thought it would be. Nevertheless, that year’s sharp learning curve initiated a process of inquiry into ‘art’ that subsequently led me to attending Art School in Canada the following year, and then later a Master’s degree in Scotland, followed by a decade of professional practice, and now this current PhD research. When I began at Art School in Canada, however, I had little-to-no skills neither in ‘art’ nor in the ‘production of aesthetic objects.’ I had only basic High School art classes; I had not had the opportunities of a Foundation Course; I could not draw or paint with any proficiency; sculpture was beyond me. Traditional, craft skills were more than elusive – they were non-existent.

Thankfully, however, I was encouraged to lean towards the skills I *did* have that had been garnered from a childhood of balancing on walls and formal gymnastics training. This encouragement resulted in a body of work that explored the place of our bodies within this world via physical events and performances. In these works (examples shown in Fig 5.2 – 5.4), I had aimed to reference the new perspective my younger self had discovered on top of that compound wall: a deeper insight into – and broader understanding of – the world via different physical experiences to the norm. The works hoped to evoke a different perspective of space; of how a body might move differently through an urban environment; and to inquire into a body’s relationship to architecture. I was interested in the notion of the functionality of our bodies, which had evolve to climb, to hunt and be far more active than it is in our Western, sedentary lifestyles.¹



Fig 5.2 *Wall Hanging*. Ben Premeaux, Digital Image. 2012.

Fig 5.3 *Flag*. Alice Finbow, Digital Image, 2010.

Fig 5.4 *Things To Do – Enschede*. Video Still. 2010.

At that stage in my practice, I had been inspired by an understanding of Mirror Neurones, which are “a distinctive class of neurones that discharge both when an animal executes a motor act and when it observes another individual performing the same or a similar motor act.”² In simpler terms, Mirror Neurones are “activated both when you do something, as well as when you watch something, so they effectively act as a mirror for the observed action”³ and “any action that we watch may be mirrored,

¹ A. Alvarez. (2012) ‘Sedentary lifestyle not to blame for obesity’ *Journal Sentinel*.

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/health/sedentary-lifestyle-not-to-blame-for-obesity-2868cb8-163809356.html>. July 26, 2012. (Available online – Accessed 6 January, 2015) & M. Martinez-Gonzalez, J. Martinez, F. Hu, M. Gibney, J. Kerney, (1999) ‘Physical inactivity, sedentary lifestyle and obesity in the European Union.’ *International Journal of Obesity Related Metabolic Disorders*. 23:11. pp. 1192 – 1201. & S. Lees, & F. Booth. (2004) ‘Sedentary Death Syndrome’. *Canadian Journal of Applied Physiology*, 2004, 29:4. pp. 447 – 460.

² G. Rizzolatti & M. Fabbri Destro ‘Mirror Neurones’ (2008), *Scholarpedia*, 3(1): 2055.

³ D. Peterson. ‘Mirror Neurons & Athletes: Learning by Watching’. (n.d.) *Axon Potential*. <http://www.axonpotential.com/mirror-neurons-and-athletes>. (Available online – Accessed 6 January, 2015).

and in some sense acted out, inside of our own brains.”⁴ This means that if a person were to witness someone else doing a physical act, his or her Mirror Neurones in the their brain would replicate that action as if he/she were actually doing the action, too. The neurological processes have been claimed to be the single most important development in human civilisation as “our ability to learn skills via imitation, use language as a communicative tool, and sense what others are thinking and feeling”⁵ is dependent on this process. Importantly, this suggests that humans understand the actions and lives of others via a *physical process*.

The above works utilised the Mirror Neurone process to evoke a different perspective of the world via my own actions of physicality. People who witnessed the acts would have an ersatz physical experience that would propose a ‘potential for transformation’ via the proposition of different (physical) perspectives. As my practice evolved to be more participatory, this ‘aesthetics of physicality’ was knitted into a collaborative methodology that involved direct physical participation in my projects and is discussed in further depth in the next chapter. This physical methodology, however, is complicated by its relationship to traditional art practices. This is broadly an issue of ‘art objects’ Vs. ‘art experiences’ and is related to a concern of spectatorship.

Due to the ephemeral nature of the physical actions, in order to ‘receive’ a work, the participant must either experience the event live and in the moment, or witness its documentation. It is the documentation that complicates this ‘aesthetics of physicality’ as these documents (in my case, in the form of video or photographs) can become viewed as art objects in-and-of-themselves, rather than ‘documents.’⁶ This emerges from their placement in galleries or museums – i.e. places that house ‘art’ and have traditionally been locations of rarefied objects. When sited in these contexts, the documents risk being inserted into a modernist lineage that is still haunted by the spectre of Greenberg, a lineage that emphasises the visual field.⁷ Greenberg advocated the primacy of ocularity, of “eyesight alone,”⁸ as the primary process of art reception, and the hangover of such an entrenched approach to art challenges the ephemera of transitory, experiential events because documents are not intended to exist in parity with modernist art objects. They have different intentions and functions. Documents are not products, nor finished aesthetic works, but clues to a past event. It is this confusion of reading documents as a ‘primary artwork’ rather than a secondary by-product of a process that can complicate the reception of the works based within a physical aesthetic.

Various artists have addressed this in different ways, from rejecting any documentation outright (e.g. Tino Seghal’s disavowal of any documentation of his works to be made or presented⁹); to developing non-gallery based documents that can explicate the project (e.g. *The Storr* (2005) publication by NVA which includes visual images, recorded testimonies, essays and information about a durational event¹⁰); to creating a suitable gallery-based artwork as a self-sufficient *reference* (e.g. Jeremy Deller’s *The Battle of*

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ The same is true of ephemeral participatory artworks that are made together in a process-based experience by ‘non-artists’ (i.e. children, etc.) and then presented in a gallery/museum.

⁷ C. A. Jones. (2006) ‘The Mediated Sensorium’ in C. A. Jones (ed.) *Sensorium: embodied experience, technology and contemporary art*. Massachusetts. MIT Press & List Visual Arts Centre.

⁸ C. Greenberg. (1993) ‘Sculpture in our time,’ in J. O’Brian (ed.) 1993 C. Greenberg, *Collected Essays and Criticism*, Volume 4. Chicago. The University of Chicago Press. p. 70.

⁹ Seghal famously refuses “to leave any material traces of his works: no objects, no documentation, nor photographs of them” K. Rittenbach ‘Tino Seghal’ *Frieze Magazine*. 6:3 2012. See also: ‘Tino Seghal’ Tate Website. <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/sehgal-this-is-propaganda-t12057/text-summary>. July 2013 (Available online – Accessed 31 March 2015).

¹⁰ See, for example, ‘The Storr’ NVA website. <http://www.nva.org.uk/past-projects/the+storr+unfolding+landscape/> (n.d.) (Available online – Accessed 31 March 2015) and M. Fisher (2005) ‘Call of the Wild’ The Guardian Website. <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2005/jul/21/art>. July 2005 (Available online – Accessed 31 March 2015)

Orgreave Archive (An Injury to One is an Injury to All) at the Tate in 2001).¹¹ In these strategies, the artists have maintained the primacy of the ephemeral event by either denying the possibility of it being processed/received via any other form (i.e. Seghal's approach to documentation) or creating a secondary process that is a suitable distillation of the ephemeral act for its context (i.e. Deller's gallery-specific documentation). Either way, the original, experiential artwork remains the authoritative aesthetic event, and the position and role of 'documentation' is clarified.

Boris Groys has commented on the use of documentation in exhibitions and argues that it complicates 'art' by suggesting it has been outsourced:¹² "Art documentation...marks the attempt to use artistic media within art spaces to refer to life itself, to a pure activity, to pure practice, to an artistic life, as it were, without wishing to present it directly."¹³ Here he is suggesting that documentation of a past experience nullifies the aesthetic experience as this outsourcing of the event into documentation does not locate the work in another context (i.e. outside the gallery/museum, which might be useful when considering participatory or non-art contexts) but rather 'art' has become concealed in an unknowable 'elsewhere'. "Being supplanted by documentation, art is no longer present and immediately visible but rather something absent and hidden."¹⁴ This reinforces a separation of the viewer of the document from the initial aesthetic experience.

This elucidates the problematic of ephemeral artworks: If one did not witness the initial, primary work, one can never truly grasp the aesthetic experience via a secondary manifestation (documentation) alone. However, as art "documentation is ...*the only possible form of reference* to an artistic activity that cannot be represented in any other way,"¹⁵ it is the only current way forward in regards to communicating physical and ephemeral artworks. For my part, I feel the documentation is useful *as a reference*, and try to avoid contexts which might wrongly collapse the objects of documentation (video, photography, etc.) with an aesthetic experience because it is the physical – and participatory – processes that are where the art lies, rather than in its 'products'.

The issue of 'products' is a concern of Claire Bishop, and while her critique concerns the outcomes of (ephemeral) participatory practices, it similarly pertains to physical works. Bishop's tome *Artificial Hells* is subtitled 'Participatory Art and the politics of spectatorship' and the central project of the book is to:

find ways of accounting for participatory art that focus on the meaning of what it produces, rather than attending solely to process. This result – the mediating object, concept, image or story – is the necessary link between the artist and a secondary audience (you and I, and everyone else who didn't participate); the historical fact of our ineradicable presence requires an analysis of the politics of spectatorship, even – and especially – when participatory art wishes to disavow this.¹⁶

¹¹ In Deller's exhibition, the items displayed allude to the historical contexts and concepts that led to his event, rather than a straight documentation of the Battle event itself. Additionally, the Mike Figgie film of the work stands as a separate reference, self-sufficiently a product in its own right, rather than documentation.

¹² This 'outsourcing' is discussed at length in Chapter 8 of C. Bishop (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso.

¹³ B Groys, (2002) 'Art in the Age of Biopolitics: From Artwork to Art Documentation' *Documenta 11*, Ostfildern-Ruit, Hatje Cantz. p. 108.

¹⁴ S. Hacklin. (2012) 'Art, documentation, life' in *Reality Bites: Document in Contemporary Art*. Helsinki, Kiasma Collections [Museum of Contemporary Art]. http://www.nabbteeri.com/art_hacklin.html. (Available online – Accessed 14 January 2015).

¹⁵ *Ibid.* (Emphasis added).

¹⁶ C. Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London, Verso. p. 9.

Her concern that “participation forecloses the traditional idea of spectatorship”¹⁷ and her inquiry into the “new understanding of art without audiences, one in which everyone is a producer”¹⁸ is a valid one. As she suggests: “To grasp participatory art from images alone is almost impossible: casual photographs of people talking, eating, attending a workshop or screening or seminar tell us very little, almost nothing, about the concept and context of a given project.”¹⁹ Participatory artists, then, need to be concerned not only with the aesthetics of the process (dialogical, agonistic, convivial, etc.) but also how to speak about the process to “you and I, and everyone else who didn’t participate.”²⁰

Bishop’s key point is that the ‘products’ of participatory projects should exist within the aesthetic realm, and invokes Rancière to qualify what she means by aesthetics: that which “implies a questioning of how the world is organised.”²¹ By this she does not suggest that artworks necessarily have to *look like art* or indeed even exist in traditional artistic contexts, but that an artwork’s resonance lies in its ability to question how the world is organised. Therefore, artists are brought to task to consider carefully in what ways the artworks maintain their aesthetic position, either during the process or in a secondary manifestation. For Bishop, she does not suggest a singular or universal way to do this, as each artwork and its context will be different, only that the key is to be aware of the risks of an ephemeral artwork *not* functioning appropriately by a lack of analysis of its (re)presentation. The same is true for physical artworks.

Kester’s concern with representation relates more to the ethics of a co-creative act rather than the objects themselves or their location in the art world. He draws on a philosophical framework to critique the display of ‘products’, employing Bourdieu’s notion of ‘embezzlement’ to describe how the artist “confirms and legitimates his or her political power through the act of literally re-presenting or exhibiting the community itself...in order to empower himself (sic) politically, professionally, and morally.”²² Here he suggests that the artist aims to utilise the representation of ephemeral participatory projects to empower him/herself. Kester does not deny that products can be exhibited, but argues that there needs to be a negotiation of “authority to take up an enunciative position that is sanctioned by that group’s social experience”²³ for an ethical presentation and re-presentation. The emphasis lies on the negotiation and a dialogical aesthetic rather than the ability for the products and artworks to problematize and present new subjectivities.

For my part, as ephemeral physical artworks do not result in physical objects, but are concerned with ephemeral physical experiences, I aim to ensure that those experiences “question how the world is organised.” Additionally, I employ documentation as *reference* in order to describe the intents, activities and processes, with the understanding that the works will always sit at a remove from “everyone else who didn’t participate.” To understand the full meaning of the work, one needs to truly witness and/or experience it directly, and this may entail that “everyone else who didn’t participate” are excluded from that process. This does not, however, mean that a reference or suitable distillation is impossible, only that it will exist as reference or distillation, not art. The main question of these ephemeral, physical works becomes *how* does that physicality make meaning and I address this by invoking the field of Embodied Cognition.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 9.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 241.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 5.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 9.

²¹ Ibid. p. 27.

²² G. Kester. (1995) ‘Aesthetic Evangelists: Conversion and Empowerment in Contemporary Community Art’ in *Afterimage* 22:6. pp. 5 – 11. p. 7.

²³ Ibid. p. 8.

5.3 Embodied Cognition

Four centuries after Descartes, we are still having trouble with the concept of mind-body dualism. The first problem arises from intellectualist tendency to regard body praxis as secondary to verbal praxis...[but in order] to discover the nature and sources of human meanings, we must explore our non-conscious bodily encounters with our world.²⁴

The above quote delineates the imperative in exploring the role of our bodies in regards to making-meaning. It also alludes to an ontological issue concerning a physical methodology: the body is a language in-and-of-itself. As suggested by the discussion on documentation above, physical acts do not translate to something else, but use the grammar and syntax of themselves to make meaning of themselves. To translate a body's meaning-making – to document, to photograph an action, to video an event, to write about it – is to turn it into something else. What was once the language of the body becomes the language of the eye, or the brain: “meaning should not be reduced to a sign which, as it were, lies on a separate plane outside the immediate domain of an act.”²⁵ This fact makes analysis and/or evaluation of physical experiences as art seemingly difficult, because to evaluate and/or to analyse suggests that we *speak* – as concept, as language, as historical narrative – about that experience; that it is translated into another contexts. In this sense, it is ostensibly problematic to derive a conceptual framework for a physical methodology in any discursive sense that is not physical. The solution to this problem lies in two fields that both involved developing an intellectual schema for a physical methodology: that of Embodied Cognition and an Anthropology of the Body.

Embodied Cognition is a field of study that suggests “embodiment seems to be at the root of seemingly disparate relationships between higher-order thoughts and basic bodily action.”²⁶ It is a study that broadly recognises cognitive and identificatory processes are inherently ‘embodied’ – in other words, our understanding of the world primarily stems from the body's physical perceptions, and these in turn shape both ontological frameworks, but also mental and conceptual frameworks. The basis of this embodied cognition is that we make sense of the world via our similar perceptions of the world: humans, generally, are of similar shapes, with similar limbs, similar perceptual abilities, and similar biological limitations. This similarity of our sensorial physicality gives rise to general shared understandings where “meaning emerges (mostly) automatically and without conscious awareness from the way we – as bodily creatures – engage with our surroundings. The fact of being embodied means that we are all subject to biological and physical events that move us, change our body states, and constrain thoughts and actions.”²⁷ Therefore, our shared physicality gives a base knowledge that requires no intellectual/conceptual translation because we are already all embodied and understand physicality tacitly. In other words, we may not be able to *speak* about physicality in a linguistic sense, but we do understand it because we have a shared physical base knowledge that is already physical.

While it cannot be questioned that physicality influences the sensory fields of our experience – visio-spatial understanding, distance perception, perspective – Embodied Cognition theorists also explain that more complicated, higher mental and conceptual activities, including self-perception, memory, language comprehension, and reasoning, are also informed and framed by our physical selves, particularly by the sensory-motor system: “abstract meaning also appropriates the meaning and logical inference of a sensory-motor source to structure our understanding of some abstract notions... [and]

²⁴ M. Johnson. (2008,) ‘Body meanings’, *New Scientist*, 12 January, pp. 46 – 47. p. 46.

²⁵ M. Jackson. (1983) ‘Knowledge of the Body’ *Man New Series*. 18:2 (June). pp .327-345. p. 328.

²⁶ E. Balcetis & S. Cole (2009) ‘Body in Mind: The Role of Embodied Cognition in Self-Regulation’ *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 3:5. pp. 759–774. p. 762.

²⁷ M. Johnson. (2008,) ‘Body meanings’, *New Scientist*, 12 January, pp. 46 – 47. p. 46.

the logic of our bodily experience provides all the logic we need to perform every rational inference we can make.”²⁸ In other words, to make ‘meaning’ of complex theories we speak of them via our bodies: a *long* way to go to understand (a body’s knowledge of time and space); a *rushed* idea (speed); *competitive* theories (physical interaction), a *weak* proposition (strength). Thus physical actions inform complicated cognitive processes, and the body therefore becomes integral in not only understanding those processes, but also altering them. The ability to alter cognitive processes is important in regards to my notions of ‘conflict’ as it suggests the body can be employed to challenge the ‘certainty of our hegemonies’ (Section 4.3, above).

Physicality is therefore already part of our conceptual frameworks, and *understanding* physicality is embedded into cognitive processes. To be clear, however, this understanding of physicality is a tacit one. It does not have words. The words we use which emerge from that tacit understandings are shorthand for the physical, and, as such, are descriptors and reference, much like ‘documentation’. They are metaphors.²⁹ This is important as it allows a viewer or participant of physical activity a conduit to understanding without requiring to *speak*, or to have a separate language of that process.

Most importantly to this text, however, is the finding by researchers in this field that through this shared understanding of the way our bodies interact with the world, we are able to form social and relational bonds. This is not a passive process, but an active one wherein “body movements can trigger affective responses.”³⁰ Our physical self is therefore important in how humans understand their place in the world in regards to self-regulation, nuanced readings of social interactions, how we form, sustain or break relational bonds, as well as any changes to the ways others view our social location/position. That physicality forms, sustains or breaks relationships suggests that the physical can therefore be employed as an effective methodology when ‘working with people as this work requires affective bonding and shared processes, even if those bonds or processes are based in conflict. In other words, as the social sphere in all its complexities is based on physical readings of each other, the body, therefore, is a useful tool to engage in that realm and its complexities.

Lastly, in regard to Embodied Cognition, the field aims to bridges the gap between the body and the mind that Descartes formulated, and find parity between the praxes. That the mind can affect the body has long been known, but the field of Embodied Cognition has explore how the body can affect the mind too, suggesting that engaging in guided, physical actions can also change the way we think and feel:

If the body moves in a way that has previously been associated with the acquisition of reward, the cognitive system may interpret this bodily cue as a sign of safety. If a body moves in a way that has been associated with harm, the cognitive system may interpret this bodily cue as a sign of threat. As a result of the signal suggested by a specific motor movement, *the cognitive system can be tuned to meet the requirements of a particular situation.*³¹

or:

Nodding one’s head leads to more positive evaluations of products and arguments, while shaking one’s head leads to more negative evaluations³²

²⁸ Ibid. p. 47.

²⁹ M. Lakoff & G. Johnson. (2003) *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago. University of Chicago Press.

³⁰ E. Balcetiš & S. Cole (2009) ‘Body in Mind: The Role of Embodied Cognition in Self-Regulation’ *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 3:5. pp. 759–774. p. 768.

³¹ E. Balcetiš & S. Cole (2009) ‘Body in Mind: The Role of Embodied Cognition in Self-Regulation’ *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 3:5. pp. 759–774. p. 765.

³² Ibid. p. 763.

and:

Judgments and decisions once described as effortful, deliberate, or intentional may be influenced unknowingly by seemingly unrelated movements of the body.³³

In a related study, those who have received Botox treatment have found that physically disabling muscles that normally engage during a specific emotion can rid the person of that emotion's intensity – and, in some cases, the emotion entirely.³⁴ This study also makes a correlation between physical acts and mental/emotional states, and all this combined research points towards an understanding that activating or hindering muscles as well as moving in certain ways associated with certain states of mind can result in a shift in mental/emotional process themselves. Guided and conscious physical actions can therefore affect mental processes and this opens up a realm of possibility where physical actions influence thought processes. It is within this possibility that an artistic physical methodological framework can operate by directly and personally experiencing physical acts that are designed to alter/challenge our place in the world. Additionally, this can also occur via witnessing and processing the experiences through Mirror Neurone process. This physical interface that alters/challenges our place in the world therefore can give rise to the possibility of transformation, i.e., an aesthetic experience.

It is important to note that throughout this chapter, I recognise and understand that there are multiple, complicated and subjective experiences of the body's interface with the world – consider (dis)ability, alternative sensitivities, different capabilities – and more research within the field of Embodied Cognition needs to be done to explore these diversities of corporeal experience. However, the point I am trying to emphasise is that it is the body itself that is the main and central interface to the external world. It is this interface that I speak about when I am emphasising the 'universality' of the corporeal experience, not the subjective experiences themselves: that the body is a main translation mechanism between ourselves, the world and other people. It is via that mechanism that practices which seek to engage a wide group of people (i.e., participatory practices) can operate effectively, as it provides a 'Rosetta Stone' through which interrelationships – and understandings – can be formed, broken, challenged or sustained, regardless – and because – of different types of interface the bodies have with the world.

To summarise thus far, Embodied Cognition provides a conceptual framework that links our mind to our bodies, and vice versa. It has revealed that our physicality is vital in how we read the world, how we speak about the world and how we are able to alter – and have altered – our conceptual and physical place in the world. It suggests a methodology of engagement in participatory settings as it provides a mechanism through which to explore the social realm in all its complexities. Embodied Cognition then points towards the understanding that our thinking is already based on schemas of 'bodiliness,' and to 'do' physical actions then can impact and alter thoughts or concepts about the world. This is useful (and important) when doing 'art' in the public realm as it means physicality itself could be employed as a 'material' in order to inquire into the specific contexts of a community's being, thus by-passing complex language and conceptual processes or the traditional visual processes that are normally associated with 'art'. It therefore is already an integral part of the social realm and, as such, can be successfully employed as an artistic methodology to talk about complex social relations, giving more immediate potentials for new understandings.

³³ Ibid. p. 759.

³⁴ T. Rodriguez. (2012) 'Botox Fights Depression'. *Scientific American* <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/botox-fights-depression/>. August 2012 (Available online – Accessed 20 March 2014)

5.4 Collaborative Anthropology and The Anthropology of the Body

I now return to the second theoretical framework that guides my methodology – The Anthropology of the Body. Whereas Embodied Cognition frames the nuances of physical interactions, the Anthropology of the Body describes the terrain on which these interactions take place. In a metaphorical sense, The Anthropology of the Body acts as the landscape on which actions of Embodied Cognition play out. Before this landscape is revealed, it is important to lay foundation on the relationship of Anthropology's relationship to Participatory Practices

In the 2006 publication, the editors of *Contemporary Art And Anthropology* argue that "the borders between anthropology and art have never been completely or rigidly demarcated,"³⁵ and that the practice of 'working with people' draws close comparisons to anthropological processes. Indeed, the two processes both share relationships with 'others' – other groups, other communities, other cultures – and also develop 'products' or 'documents' from those relationships – studies, papers, displays, artworks, objects, films, research, installations, concepts, and arguments. Additionally, both Anthropologists and Participatory Practitioners have been accused of being "practitioners who appropriate from, and represent, others."³⁶ It is this concern for representation that is the crux of the similarities between Anthropology and Participatory Practices. I have explored the issues of displaying documentation above, but the below analysis discusses the gathering of anthropological and/or participatory products as this can reveal the power dynamics and ethical frameworks at play.

In the Anthropology of the past, there was little concern with racial or gender parity: consider Sarah 'Saartjie' Baartman³⁷ who was forcibly removed from her Khoi Khoi people in Southern Africa in the early 1800s and displayed for 6 years throughout London and Paris, presented as a spectacle of savagery, sexuality and uncivilised 'difference' from the Victorian norm. The display of Aboriginal bones in various national and private museums around the world is another example of the racist and hierarchical tendencies of the colonial world: a world that understood 'the other' as 'lesser' and presented it as such, without respect for its histories, belief systems or peoples. In parallel to displays, Elizabeth Edwards has written extensively on the role of the photographic documentation within museums – as well as photographs themselves – in also perpetuating colonial hegemonies and "how photographs and their making actually operated in fluids spaces of idealogical and cultural meaning"³⁸ in the "legacy of colonial relations and the representation of the colonial past."³⁹ Her writings are a useful resource on exploring the representation of colonialism within the museum via documentation.

While it is not the place of this text to unravel how the post-colonial movement has affected displaying anthropological data, the examples are useful to highlight that, then – as now – those with power and resources to display how they saw the world was ordered did so in ways that reflected and reinforced their hegemonies. Contemporaneously, there is an intra-disciplinary debate about how to present anthropological data of other cultures in a sensitive manner: (i.e. *Revealing Histories: Myths about Race* at the Manchester Museum in 2009 or the current Europe-wide research *European Museums In An Age Of Migrations*) and deeper reflection on how

³⁵ A. Schneider & C. Wright (2006) 'The Challenge of Practice' in A. Schneider & C. Wright (eds). *Contemporary Art and Anthropology*. Oxford, New York: Berg, pp. 1 – 28. p. 2.

³⁶ A. Schneider & C. Wright (eds). *Contemporary Art and Anthropology*. Oxford, New York: Berg in K. Strohm. (2012) 'When Anthropology Meets Contemporary Art: Notes for a Politics of Collaboration.' *Collaborative Anthropologies*, Volume 5. pp. 98-124.

³⁷ Her Khoi Khoi name was never recorded and remains unknown.

³⁸ E. Edwards. (2001) *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums*. Oxford. Berg. p. 3.

³⁹ E. Edwards & M. Mead (2013) 'Absent Histories and Absent Images: Photographs, Museums and the Colonial Past' *Museums and Society*, 11:1. pp. 19 – 38. p. 19.

to “embrace notions of diversity, accessibility, outreach, repatriation, and institutional collaboration; shifting... the museum as essentially collection-focused to museums as essentially public-service institutions.”⁴⁰

Bernadette Lynch and Samuel Alberti, however, argue that the hangover of racist and hierarchical practices still affect the museum today,⁴¹ both in how it displays anthropological documents as well as how it approaches ‘working with other people’ in participatory projects, especially when the focus is on the ‘otherness’ of the people with whom they are working (i.e. poor communities, migrants, ‘problem’ neighbourhoods). This is a concern of *cultural colonisation*⁴² and Lynch and Alberti suggest that participatory practitioners need to examine to what extent their models of ‘working with other people’ are operating within the ethically problematic paradigms of previous anthropological approaches, rather than exploring more egalitarian ways of ‘working with people’ possible today.

This is also addressed in Hal Foster’s “Artist As Ethnographer” (1996) wherein he examines the ‘alterity’ approach of participatory practices, and evokes the radical call of Walter Benjamin in 1930s Paris for artists to be ‘Producers’ in a political and cultural sense, but to avoid the patronising approach of being ‘cultural benefactor’. Foster sees parallels with that call and the necessity of challenging the quasi-anthropological approach of participatory artists who claim a political and transgressive stance, but do so without examining the structures that sustain and support their positions as cultural authorities:

Just as the productivist sought to stand in the reality of the proletariat only to in part sit in the place of the patron, so the quasi-anthropological artist today may seek to work with sited communities with the best motives of political engagement and institutional transgression, only in part to have this work recorded by its sponsors as social outreach, economic development, public relations... or art.⁴³

In this way, Lynch and Alberti, and Foster, call for an analysis of the intention of participatory artworks in order to understand *how* participatory projects function. Foster’s analysis of an anthropological approach – the “science of alterity...[based] on a primitivist assumption”⁴⁴ – which ostensibly aims to critique power structures but “may actually reinforce [them] by positioning the anthropologist as the expert reader of culture-as-text,”⁴⁵ is therefore a resonant critique for any participatory practice. He challenges artists to examine the “problems that arise when art tries to follow the ethnographic principles of participant-observer.”⁴⁶

⁴⁰ B. Lynch (2010) ‘Custom-made reflective practice: can museums realise their capabilities in helping others realise theirs?’ in *Museum Management and Curatorship*. 26:5. pp. 441 – 458. p. 441.

⁴¹ B. Lynch & S. Alberti. (2010) ‘Legacies of prejudice: racism, co-production and radical trust in the museum’ in *Museum Management and Curatorship*. 25:1. pp. 13 – 35.

⁴² The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology describes cultural colonisation as referring to two related practices: “the extension of colonial power through cultural activities and institutions (particularly education and media) or the asymmetrical influence of one culture over another.” (G. Ritzer (ed.) (2006) *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

⁴³ H. Foster. (1996) ‘The Artist as Ethnographer’ in H. Foster (1996) *The Return of the Real*. Cambridge: The MIT Press. p. 302.

⁴⁴ B. Hopkins’ (2003) ‘The Artist as Ethnographer – Annotations’ Hopkins’ The University of Chicago website. <http://csmt.uchicago.edu/annotations/fosterartist.htm> Winter (Available online – Accessed 11 January 2015)

⁴⁵ H. Foster. (1996) ‘The Artist as Ethnographer’ in H. Foster (1996) *The Return of the Real*. Cambridge: The MIT Press. p. 302.

⁴⁶ B. Hopkins’ (2003) ‘The Artist as Ethnographer – Annotations’ Hopkins’ The University of Chicago website. <http://csmt.uchicago.edu/annotations/fosterartist.htm> Winter (Available online – Accessed 11 January 2015)

⁴⁶ H. Foster. (1996) ‘The Artist as Ethnographer’ in H. Foster (1996) *The Return of the Real*. Cambridge: The MIT Press. p. 302.

In a similar vein, Collaborative Anthropology grew out of a similar ethical concern that sought to both redress the approaches that sustained colonial practices but also to develop collaborative and egalitarian relationships with 'other' people. Rancière's argument on politics is employed by Collaborative Anthropologists to reconfigure the notion of politics as the "order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task."⁴⁷ (This notion echoes Foucault's notion of *Gouvernementalité* mentioned in previous chapters, and is useful to reiterate here as they both rely on a policing of physicality.) Rancière renames the processes that assign bodies as 'the police,' however, this is a neutral definition, rather than an overtly critical notion of the Police (i.e. the strong-arm of the law). From this redefinition, he then reorders and renames 'politics' as what happens when bodies shift "from their assigned place, of making visible what was once not allowed to be seen, and making heard what was once only noise."⁴⁸ Anthropologist Kiven Strohm draws from this argument and suggests that Collaborative Anthropology is concerned with equality and this equity can only occur when politics is supported as a "a disruption of the police order, a disidentification with its spatial and temporal ordering of bodies." As he writes: "politics is dissensus."⁴⁹

In this manner, Collaborative Anthropology aims to shift "control of the research process out of the hands of the anthropologist and into the collective sphere of the anthropologist on an equal basis with community researchers."⁵⁰ For Collaborative Anthropological perspective, this could mean co-authoring films, collaborating on papers, or even developing site-responsive and context-specific research with a community that renegotiates the final resting place of the knowledge formed/gained during the project.

This focus on the ethics of representation and equality is also a concern of participatory practitioners, especially when it comes to the 'endpoints' of process-based projects, e.g., exhibiting in a gallery/museum objects that were made by participants as part of a process-based or dialogic experience: do the exhibited objects appropriately and effectively 'stand-in' for the process of engagement? Rather, the process-led participatory experience aim to value a process of thinking with others, and reject notions of 'endpoints' that recapitulate (cultural) hegemonies and instead favours a more egalitarian approach of knowledge-making; that foster an understanding 'others' on their own terms, in their own situation, within their own processes; and (importantly for this text) that do not necessarily require the return of knowledge-making or understanding to an academic/anthropological/museum or gallery complex. From this framework, I draw a direct point of contact between Collaborative Anthropology and my specific iteration of participatory arts, and return to Embodied Cognition as a 'base knowledge' that seeks to explore an ethics of representation based around a shared physicality, rather than through the production of objects for display. In other words, I seek to enact a co-creation based in an aesthetics of physicality and I refer back to Mouffe's notion of agonism to reference a co-creative act that is still conflictual. My methodological approach that navigates this draws from Michael Jackson's

⁴⁶ B. Hopkins' (2003) 'The Artist as Ethnographer – Annotations' Hopkins' The University of Chicago website. <http://csm.uchicago.edu/annotations/fosterartist.htm> Winter (Available online – Accessed 11 January 2015)

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ K. Strohm. (2012) 'When Anthropology Meets Contemporary Art: Notes for a Politics of Collaboration.' *Collaborative Anthropologies*, Volume 5. pp. 98 – 124. p. 107.

⁵⁰ J. Rappaport. (2008) 'Beyond Participant Observation: Collaborative Ethnography as Theoretical Innovation.' *Collaborative Anthropologies* 1. pp. 1 – 31 in K. Strohm. (2012) 'When Anthropology Meets Contemporary Art: Notes for a Politics of Collaboration.' *Collaborative Anthropologies*, Volume 5. pp. 98 – 124. p. 108.

'Anthropology of the Body.'⁵¹ Jackson's practice saw the 'knowledge of the body' as the primary site – and transmitter – of cultural knowledge, rather than social, religious or intellectual processes.

Unlike Foster's article, Jackson was less concerned about the position of the artist in entering into an 'other' culture, (although, this is still an ethical concern for him, as for any practitioner working with 'others') but more about position of the body, specifically about the necessity of undergoing *similar physical experiences* of the society in order to read, and have an understanding of the culture. He argues that it was the physical experiences themselves that gave rise to understandings, and this elides directly with my emphasis on 'residency' based works when working in participatory practices as 'living in the same way' allowed me to be physical in the same way as the communities in which I was resident, thus becoming a living-part, contributing part of that world (albeit briefly).

Michael Jackson developed his theories in the 1980s, in the nascent period of Collaborative Anthropology, and argued for an 'anthropology of the body' that placed the "bodily praxis in the immediate social field and material world."⁵² The meaning of the "body praxis is not always reducible to cognitive and semantic operations: body movement often makes sense without being intentional in the linguistic sense, as communicating, codifying, symbolising, signifying thoughts or things that lie outside or anterior to speak.... As [David] Best puts it, 'Human movement does not symbolise reality, it *is* reality.'⁵³ ⁵⁴ He emphasised that the physical actions are not a representation of culture but were instead the very nature of the culture: "To treat body praxis as necessarily being an effect of semiotic causes is to treat the body as a diminished version of itself."⁵⁵

Jackson argued for a framework of understanding that was not based on speaking or representing the body, but understanding the body on its own terms, and drew on the philosopher Merleau-Ponty who suggested bodily experience – via its senses and perceptions – was the primary mechanism through which one understands the world around us, as with Embodied Cognition, above. These perceptions could not be translated into another form (i.e. a semiotic, a conceptual or intellectual framework) and this inability of translation meant that knowledge could only stem from a shared sensorial/perceptual understanding:

For by using one's body in the same way as others in the same environment, one finds oneself informed by an understanding which may then be interpreted according to one's own custom or bent, yet which remains grounded in a field of practical activity and thereby remains constant with the experience of those among whom one has lived.⁵⁶

In other words, it is through shared physical experiences that can one find connections and begin to develop meanings with 'others'. Again, that physical experiences provide the context to develop shared meanings with 'others' is highly useful when considering participatory practices, as this is the very premise of the practice. Again, also, I am not suggesting these shared meanings are necessarily based in a consensus, but rather a mechanism through which to approach a context.

⁵¹ M. Jackson. (1983) 'Knowledge of the Body', *Man New Series*. 18:2. pp. 327 – 345.

⁵² M. Jackson. (1983) 'Knowledge of the Body', *Man New Series*. 18:2. pp. 327 – 345. p. 329.

⁵³ D. Best. (1978) *Philosophy and Human Movement*. London. Allen & Unwin.

⁵⁴ M. Jackson. (1983) 'Knowledge of the Body' *Man New Series*. 18:2. pp. 327 – 345. p. 239. (Emphasis added).

⁵⁵ M. Jackson. (1983) 'Knowledge of the Body' *Man New Series*. 18:2. pp. 327 – 345

⁵⁶ M. Jackson. (1983) 'Knowledge of the Body' *Man New Series*. 18:2. pp. 327 – 345. pp. 340 – 341.

In Jackson's case, that was a concern with anthropological understandings – i.e. living and working with 'others' studied as part of anthropological fieldwork. However, it is also relevant when engaging with *any* group that is not one's own if seeking to develop shared knowledge with them, and could therefore apply to anyone interacting with "people who are not oneself."⁵⁷ In this sense, physical interactions are the essential components when participating with others, as they can become a tool for understanding and knowledge-making between anthropologist and 'tribe'; between participatory artist and group; or between any groups or individuals that are based in equal and egalitarian approaches. Eliding this with Embodied Cognition, physical actions can then also be 'endpoints' in themselves, rather than just the materials of semiotic, conceptual or intellectual endpoints, in that the corporeal can act to provide new meanings, shared knowledge and the basis for interrelationships.

This is both the reason and the framework that my work was carried out onsite and within various communities over the course of this research: i.e. within a residency format. In framing my practice within residency type contexts, I could physically and collaboratively engage in the rituals, the movements, the tacit and kinetic understandings of bodily limitations and restrictions, how the communities were physical with each other, and thereby develop not only a deeper understanding of the social realm, but also foster deeper and more participatory relationships than could have otherwise been developed in non-residency situations. My physical presence and engagement was essential to the *participatory* nature the engagement. The works that developed out of these residencies are discussed in the next chapter.

5.5 Conclusion

Via Embodied Cognition, the body is understood as a mechanism through which interactions of knowledge-making, meaning and understanding can occur physically – both in its tacit reading of the world around us, but also in its ability to communicate new meanings and challenge/question how the world is organised: it can be used as an aesthetic tool. The Anthropology of the Body provides the framework on which Embodied Cognition sits and calls for ethical approaches and shared meaning-making in that it does not focus on 'representation' (i.e. documentation) but rather the immediate physical exchange for its aesthetic salience. In doing so, it hopes to resist colonial forms that might emerge out of traditional, paternalistic gallery/museum and/or anthropological strategies, but also in an ethical exchange with 'others.' Additionally, within the 'Anthropology of the Body' approach, having similar physical experiences as the people he/she are working with, allows one (anthropologist or artist) to read – and have an understanding of – the culture within one is based, thus providing a system for egalitarian exchange, even if this exchange is a conflictual one. My own physical methodology draws from these practices and seeks to employ the body for ethical co-creation based in an aesthetics of physicality (rather than via the creation of objects) in order to develop egalitarian and conflictual participatory projects. As a physical approach also provides the context through which to develop affective bonding and sharing processes with 'others', it is therefore highly useful when considering participatory practices, as this is an integral part of the process and content of the practice. Considering these notions, a physical methodology becomes a significant and integral approach to ethical participatory practices as it can offer direct engagement with others, as well as a parity of experience in regards to aesthetic experience.

⁵⁷ This phrase is an adaptation of a phrase by artist Anne-Marie Copstake. The original phrase was spoken when she was asked who or what type of person she worked with, to which she replied: "I work with people who are not me". (Informal gathering of participatory practitioners, April 2010. Tramway, Glasgow).

6. The Work: Practice-based Research in Action And Reflection



Fig 6.1 *Push*, Photographic documentation, 2008.

6.0 Introduction: When a project is an artwork and a work is also an artwork

In 2008, about half-way through the residency that led to the *Legacy...* artwork mentioned in previous chapters, I found myself sitting on the steps of the Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA), contemplating the confusing confluence of requirements that had emerged from the project: the community's needs, the necessity to create *ethical* participatory project, my desire to make a critical artwork, the institution's remit and the ameliorative goals of the brief.

As I sat, frustrated at not being able to think of a clear path through those different demands, I found myself responding to the problem in an intuitive, physical way. I began to lean, to climb and to play with the structure immediately around me: the gallery building itself, with its neoclassical columns and architecture. I discovered that if I stretched between the pillars, I fit almost perfectly between them. I could hold myself up, creating a bridge and, as long as I managed to push hard enough, to apply enough force, I found a balance. Now, years later, I realise that I was seeing the building as a physical manifestation of the institutional structures and in my intuitive physicality, I realise I was trying to find a way – literally – to fit into those structures. My action became metaphorical for how I might find an understanding of my place as an artist within larger institutional structures. A single photograph captures that action, as well as the reactions of onlookers and the faces of the staff in the windows. (Fig 6.0, above)

Later, this photograph was to be included in an anthology on contemporary museum practices,¹ and the editor asked me what it was 'about'. I found I was at a loss to explain it succinctly or hermetically, as it was not a self-contained idea that was conceived prior to the moment. It was not platonic in its form, or in its creation. It

¹ J. Marstine. (ed.) (2011) *Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics: Redefining Ethics for the Twenty-First Century Museum*. London and New York. Routledge.

emerged from that moment of frustration, and so I could not say what it was 'about' without reference to the context from whence it emerged. The work does not 'make sense' without knowing the background to – and context of – its creation. The two are inseparable.

I cite this example to explain that my practice does not result in self-standing objects that can be discussed abstractly. It does not operate from a modernist tradition of the solitary artist, generating content for the White Cube from the hermetic birthing chamber of his/her studio. Rather, it functions under the remit suggested by the Artist Placement Group: "context is half the work,"² – i.e. that the understanding of where an artwork emerges from is as important as the work itself. As such, my practice reacts and responds to the world around me, and the works that emerge are intimately tied to – and need to be read *via* – that world. Below, I discuss my practice-led research in response to my research questions and do so with the understanding that the works discussed are in response to specific contexts and should be considered from perspective of those contexts.

The projects all primarily developed out of residency-based situations, responding to the context, and each work collectively contributes to a narrative of inquiry. These narratives are not 'linear' in the sense that they necessarily and always built up to 'final work' that could be considered a 'culmination' of a project. Instead, these 'final works' (if they exist) are often a distillation of the projects, but not the endpoint. This is an important distinction as I do not want to place undue emphasis on the 'larger' works at the cost of smaller, more subtle and sometimes more effective events that emerged along the way. Additionally, I do not discuss every single work but include the salient shifts that explore conflict within participatory practices that occur within institutional settings. This is done in a broadly chronological fashion, with each section beginning with a brief contextualisation followed by the research findings.

To be clear on terminology, I refer to each response to a specific context as an artistic 'project', and each project is comprised of many interrelated 'works'. This does not, however, mutually exclude a component work from also being an artwork in itself, as it can also individually inquire into an aspect of the context in a self-contained manner. As participatory works involve the co-creative response to a context, there will be different ways of approaching or considering that context collaboratively (with different people, in different situations, with different approaches, etc.), so each of these different approaches (i.e. works) can act as *part* of a collective whole. For example, my climbing of the pillars above exists as a self-contained artwork, but also contributes to the entirety of the project at GoMA. This distinction is similar to a triptych or polyptych of paintings, in the sense that that each painting can exist as a work on its own terms, but aesthetically functions in its entirety when considered together.

Additionally, the co-authorial role of participation complicates who *owns* the projects and works, and therefore who can talk authoritatively about it. While I can claim copyright of the documentation and intellectual property rights of an instigative idea, the co-creative and co-authorial nature of participation demands that participants will have their own way of owning that experience, which will undoubtedly be different from mine. Therefore, what follows is my insight as the instigating artist, but also a co-participant.

6.1 Timespan: There Will Be Blood

The first project of the research occurred in Helmsdale, Sutherlandshire, in the far north of Scotland. It is a seaside village of approximately 600 residents, located at the

² Artist Placement Group (1980) 'Artist Placement Group Manifesto' on *Practice Art website* (<http://practiceart.blogspot.co.uk/2011/01/artist-placement-group-manifesto.html>) January. (Available online – Accessed 12 June 12, 2014).

meeting place between the meandering Helmsdale River and the wild, cold North Sea. It, along with Bettyhill and Tamline, is one of a cluster of small fishing villages built in the early-to-mid-1800s to accommodate the tenant farmers that had been cleared from their lands by the Sutherland Estate. As the village's inception is deeply entwined with the events known as the Highland Clearances, these events remain ever-present in the social psyche.

In contemporary day-to-day life, the small village faces many of the challenges that other remote settlements in the North of Scotland face: the collapse of the traditional fishing industry due to large-scale industrialisation of the sector elsewhere, opportunities in the North Sea Oil industry are too far away to be a feasible commute, and a lack of local opportunities for employment drives an exodus to bigger cities (in particular Aberdeen and Inverness).³ The nascent wind-farm industries do offer some general employment opportunities, but it is insufficient to stem the depopulation trend as many youngsters leave the village to find work. The main source of income to the village is tourism, though it is highly seasonal and inconsistent.

Ironically, the main stabilising force within the village in recent years has been a large influx of older settlers (mostly from England) who immigrate to the village, seeing it a more desirable place to raise children, to be away from big cities, to be closer to nature, and to take advantage of property values and quality of life compared to larger centres. This influx, however, has led to tensions between those who see themselves as 'local' and those who are viewed as 'incomers'⁴ – this latter group are seen not to value or understand the traditional way of life, nor fully comprehend the heritage of the area, specifically, the importance of the Highland Clearances.

The Clearances were a wide-reaching strategy of the 1700s and 1800s in response to the modernisation of agriculture within the UK, and occurring at different speeds and various degrees of violence.⁵ In Scotland, it occurred mostly in the Highlands, and saw landowners (or those wishing to be landowners) remove 'traditional' subsistence farmers and small agricultural townships from familial lands and replacing their small-holdings with a larger-scale, agricultural industry, resulting in vast fortunes being made by the landowners and the subsistence farmers being relocated, often emigrating to other countries, such as Canada. The emigration of Scots to Canada, Australia and other commonwealth countries spawned a 'Highland Clearances Diaspora' and an indelible mark on the culture of the Highlands.⁶

In the context of Sutherland, Elizabeth, Countess of Sutherland – the hereditary Clan Leader of the Sutherlands – had been raised in Edinburgh and London by her Grandmother, after her parents had died in her infancy. In the early 1800s she began conversations with William Young (an economist and important figure in the later years of the 'Enlightenment' in Edinburgh) about how to modernise and improve her assets, and she and Young came up with the 'Highland Improvements Scheme' which consisted of relocating the subsistence tenant farmer to the coast, training them to become fishermen and women, and reforming the remaining land into 'modern' farms, to be managed by singular-family farming strong-holds who would pay rent to the

³ T. Pateman. (2010) 'Rural and urban areas: comparing lives using rural/urban classifications'. *Office for National Statistics. Regional Trends 43*. & 'Review of Scotland's Cities – The Analysis' *Scottish Executive*, 2002. B26917-12-02

⁴ An example of this would be conversations I had with local crofter Crispin who has lived in the area for 47 years and is still referred to as an 'incomer.' How much of this is a self-claimed and a perceived dispute versus an actual and problematic experience is rather difficult to unpick. Regardless, the divisions remain.

⁵ The Enclosure Acts 1845 to 1882 within England are also examples of this movement, along with earlier Inclosure Acts of the British Agricultural Revolution.

⁶ See, for example, J. Hunter's (2000) *The Making of the Crofting Community*. Edinburgh. John Donald Publishers Ltd. or J. Prebble's (1963) *The Highland Clearances*. London. Penguin Books.

Sutherlands, as well as provide them with a portion of the profits they received from their crops.⁷

In the 1810s, this scheme begun in earnest and in the Helmsdale area, a landowner who was renting Crakaig Farm from the Sutherlands – William Clunes – was given the area of Kildonan to develop a new sheep farm once the tenants had been relocated. On January 6th, 1813, he arrived into Kildonan (10 miles from the current site of Helmsdale) to survey the land. The locals, who would have heard about other townships and areas being ‘cleared’, rose up in resistance against him, chasing him from the land with farm tools and Shinty sticks. This small act of resistance resulted in arrests, court cases, petitions of forgiveness to the Countess, Militia involvement, and the eventual forcible clearance of Kildonan and the surrounding area. This flashpoint, sometimes referred to as the Kildonan Riots, was the beginning of 20 years of Clearances in the area, and led to roughly a third of the approximately 2000 people in the Strath of Kildonan being relocated to Canada (mostly to Winnipeg), roughly a third to Helmsdale and locales, and roughly a third to Glasgow and other centres.⁸

The cultural impact on the Clearances to Helmsdale is obviously of key concern to those in the area, and in January 1986, the Helmsdale Heritage and Arts Society (now Timespan Museum and Gallery) was initiated, “with the main aim of providing the community and visitors with an insight into the rich heritage of Helmsdale and its surrounding area,”⁹ specifically the heritage of the Highland Clearances. As the major public resource on the Clearances in the North of Scotland, the majority of Timespan’s permanent exhibitions, collections and focus centres on these events. Additionally, the diaspora of the Highland Clearances offer a fairly regular economic contribution to the village with many international visitors coming to explore their ancestors and the history of these events, not to mention educational tours and academic research that occurs. Timespan is therefore invested in the narrative of the Clearances as it provides the institution with the majority of its income/visitors. As the main tourist destination of the village, it is therefore a recognisable economic force, and in the summer months is the largest local employer.



Fig 6.1 Exterior of Timespan, Digital Photograph, March 2013.

In recent years, since the last renovation, the institution has tried to balance the heritage focus with more contemporary art, making stronger links with its original mission statement, now emblazoned above the main entrance: “A Meeting Place Between Our Past and Our Future.” The current director, Anna Vermehren introduced a thematic programme in 2012 which comprises of year-long programmes all relating to a single theme, each incorporating various different strategies suitable to the topic,

⁷ E. Richards. (1973) *The Leviathan of Wealth: The Sutherland fortune in the industrial revolution*. London. Routledge see also M. Bangor-Jones (2002) ‘Sheep Farming In Sutherland In The Eighteenth Century’ *The Agricultural History Review*. 50:2. pp. 181 – 202.

⁸ These facts were communicated to me Timespan’s Chief Heritage Officer Jacquie Aitkin, are also found in J. Hunter (2000) *The Making of the Crofting Community*. Edinburgh. John Donald Publishers Ltd, as well as the more inflammatory J. Prebble (1963) *The Highland Clearances*. London. Penguin Books. 1963.

⁹ ‘About’ Timespan Museum and Gallery website. <http://timespan.org.uk>. June 2013 (Available online – Accessed 9 February, 2015).

including contemporary responses to heritage concerns, alliances and links with other national and international bodies, as well as residencies and exhibitions. For 2013, Vermehren and Chief Archivist Jacquie Aitkin designed a programme that explored the bicentenary of the Highland Clearances of the area starting with the Kildonan Riots, which had taken place in February 1813. The programme hoped to provide an

exciting year-long community programme of festivities, including traditional music and dance from Sutherland and Manitoba, Canada, ceremonies and commemorations with honorary guests, new museum displays and art residencies, townships tours and torch lit procession, lectures by Clearances and Diaspora authors and much, much more.¹⁰

I was invited by Vermehren to develop a 3-month project under this thematic umbrella, particularly responding to the Kildonan Riots. As 'conflict' was a key component to my thesis, the opportunity to develop a participatory work that responded directly to the theme of 'riots' was enticing. Additionally, I had spoken to Vermehren about my interest in 'institutional intent' and she had intimated that, as the organisation was going through a period of change, it might benefit from such an inquiry. The project therefore offered a series of springboards from which I could explore some of the essential topics of my inquiry.

6.1.1 Timespan: Riots and Conflicts

Arriving in the village in January, I spent several days acclimatising to village life and researching the museum's collection before going out to meet people to actually begin the practice-based, participatory research. Beginning a project is always difficult as an outsider, and so began the residency with a methodology I have used successfully before: the *Performative Interviews*¹¹ (T1¹²). This consists of interviewing people within the community on film and asking an intentionally contentious statement. This was done both as a way to introduce myself and the project but also encourage dialogue. The hope was that the contentious statement would propose an alternative hegemony to the dominant one, and in doing so induce conflict. In this sense, and referring back to Johan Galtung's theories, I was intentionally offering a different 'pursuit of goals' to encourage interaction and/or value-exchange and the potential for a different perspective. Particular to the Helmsdale context, I wanted to draw attention to the dominant hegemony of the Highland Clearances Heritage focus and their importance to the village in general – and to the institution specifically – and so asked: "What if the Highland Clearances had Never Happened?"

The answers were extremely varied, from dismissive 'I don't care', to a reflective re-thinking through history, to vitriolic attacks on the Sutherlands (both past and present), to an acceptance that though the Clearances were problematic, they had resulted in a better quality of life. The diversity of responses was then screened back to villagers and the discussions that followed suggested the need for further dialogic events and so I organised several more events in different contexts and for different audiences to continue the debates. These included: *Lets Have A Riot I, II, and III*, (T4), *Proposals for Temporary Monuments To History* (T5), *Schools Visit* (T6), and *Search for Seize* (T8).

From these events, I realised two things: firstly, the village (or, at least those who were directly engaging with the topic, which was approximately 40% of the population)

¹⁰ Timespan Monthly E-Newsletter, January 8th, 2013.

¹¹ Credit must be given to Sophie Hope, from whom I have appropriated this term. See her PhD thesis (Hope, S. (2012) *Participating in the 'Wrong' Way? Practice Based Research into Cultural Democracy and the Commissioning of Art to Effect Social Change*. PhD Thesis. London: University of London) for further details on this term and her use of it.

¹² Each work listed for the first time will be followed by a code that can be cross-referenced within APPENDIX 1 for a further description of the work, including images and video links.

broadly fell into two camps – those that felt “The Clearances Are Still Happening” and those that felt the “Clearances Are Over”. The former were far more numerous and they felt that the legacy of these historical events were one of – if not *the* – most important cultural topic: they were committed to the narrative that Clearances were a vital historical event that still affected the village today. The latter felt that the Highland Clearances, while important, was merely one historical event in an area that had 6000 years of human habitation, and other topics also deserved exploration.



Fig 6.3.1 *Badges*, Photographic documentation, January – February 2013.
 Fig 6.3.2 *Badges*, Photographic documentation, January – February 2013.
 Fig 6.3.3 *Badges*, Photographic documentation, January – February 2013.

Secondly, those from the latter “The Clearances Are Over” camp appeared to have few mechanisms to express themselves due to the dominant hegemony of the former. This alterity was therefore quite ‘invisible’ within the community, and considering Chantal Mouffe’s supposition that critical art “makes visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate, aiming to give voice within the existing hegemony.”¹³ I attempted to find a way to provide a voice, or at least an expression of the plurality of thought. This took the form of one of the major works of the project: *Badges* (T3 – see page 146 for more information about this work).

This consisted of 700 badges – enough for each villager to have at least one – with 350 saying “The Clearances Are Still Happening” and 350 saying “The Clearances Are Over”. These were offered for free at the major locations within the village: at the supermarket, the community centre, at Timespan as well as me offering them personally to people I met in the streets or at my events. The aim was to provide a visual clue to different perspectives and, rather than instigate conflict, the work revealed and highlighted the pre-existing diversity. In other words, the desire was to provide opportunities to present alternative hegemonies, challenging the status quo and encourage a plural democratic cultural sphere. As Rosalyn Deutsche clarifies: “Conflict, division, and instability, then, do not ruin the democratic public sphere; they are conditions of its existence,”¹⁴ and pertained directly to my research question: How can conflict be productive/generative within participatory art projects. In this instance, conflict helped reveal a more pluralistic public realm that was assumed to exist

The effect of this ‘invitation for conflict’ was almost instantaneous and I personally witnessed many debates in the streets, heated discussions at Timespan and arguments in the town shop emerging from an individual seeing another villager wearing a different badge. I felt this work was therefore successful as it provided opportunities to examine the way in which the world was being organised from a personal perspective:

One’s subjective experience of reality is the nexus of social motivation; that everyone constructs his world with himself in it; but this reality construction

¹³ C. Mouffe. (2007) ‘Agonistic Politics and Artistic Practices’ (Lecture) Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow, 2nd March.

¹⁴ R. Deutsche (1996) *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* Cambridge, Mass. MIT Press, 1996. p. 295 – 96 as quoted in C. Bishop, (2004) *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics*. *October*. Volume 110. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

is primarily done by communication, real or imaginary, with other people; and hence people hold the keys to each other's identities.¹⁵

Similarly:

As relational beings, humans can only ever successfully learn about themselves through engagement with another.¹⁶

In other words, it is only through engagement with others that we understand ourselves – it is how we make sense of the world: by rubbing up against those parts of the world that are *not* us, that we disagree with, we find out where we end and they begin. In the case of *Badges*, the work gave an insight into *which* 'heritage narrative' was being privileged. Interestingly, after several weeks, some residents started wearing both types of badges. This could be seen as a desire not to align oneself to a 'side' or to present a less binary understanding of the topic, but either way, this action problematized the dominant discourse of the Highland Clearances being the most important historical narrative within the village. As such, the project as a whole started to present opportunities where perspectives on the Clearances was challenged, and in doing so, offered the 'potential for transformation'.

6.1.2 Timespan: Policy versus Institutional Intent

Up until the 6th week of the project, most of the works aimed to invoke inter- and intra-personal conflict that explored the multiplicity of perspectives of the Clearances within the village, devised in dialogic contexts. Over those 6 weeks I had managed to come to an understanding about the 'institutional intent' of Timespan and began to explore this aspect of the project. My secondary research question focuses on the relationship between participatory projects and the institutions that commission them. Before I had begun my research, I had read Andy Hewitt's *Privatising the Public: Three rhetorics of art's public good in 'Third Way' (2011) cultural policy*¹⁷ and it had been influential in my understanding of the instrumentalisation of participatory practices, particularly in regards to how governmental departments might use this type of work as a tool of the state's neoliberal social engineering via cultural policy. However, other work in the field made me realise that the instrumentalisation of participatory practices is not only an issue of governmental policy, because not all participatory practices fall under governmental remits. Timespan, for example, received funding from both private and public sources and had no direct obligation to state policy directives. Additionally, my reading of Mouffe and her application of hegemonic structures clarified that a governmental approach was not the only power operating in society. I therefore developed a research question that read: How can conflict reveal and challenge 'institutional intent' within participatory art projects? The intention of this question was to still focus on the problematics of instrumentalisation, but make the question applicable in a variety of institutional contexts, including – but not exclusive too – governmental.

Considering this, I was interested in how Timespan was recapitulating the 'Clearances Are Still Happening' hegemony and looked for ways to reveal or problematize that intention. This was done via work called *History On Trial* (T13 – see page 148 for more information about this work). The original inspiration for this work occurred early on in the residency, when I had invited school children to a workshop exploring what contemporary parallels might be drawn from the Kildonan Riots and to creatively re-

¹⁵ R. Collins. (1975) *Conflict Sociology: Towards An Explanatory Science*. San Francisco, Academic Press.

¹⁶ B. Lynch, as quoted by V. Hollows. (2013) 'The Performance of Internal Conflict and the Art of Activism.' *Museum Management and Curatorship*. 28:1. pp. 35 – 53.

¹⁷ A. Hewitt. (2011) 'Privatising the Public: Three rhetorics of art's public good in 'Third Way' cultural policy' in *Art & the Public Sphere*, 1:1. pp. 19-36.

imagine them for a contemporary setting (*Re-Riot* (T7)). As they were fairly young (8 – 10 year olds) they were not greatly informed of the details of the Clearances, and in school they had learned only that the Sutherlands had forced their ancestors off their lands. They were intrigued to know more and in their recreation of the riots, the main parallel to the authority of the Sutherlands was to ‘school’, and as such, the project featured an imaginary riot against education. From this event, I wondered how the youth were being educated in regards to the Clearances: was the dominant view merely being replicated in these children as a way to entrench the dominant hegemony? As the future enactors of local culture, what ways were their views being valued? I combined this idea with my new understandings of ‘institutional intent’ to develop *History On Trial*, reasoning that the institution was invested in a particular reading of history that was intent on entrenching the Highland Clearances narrative as the most important historical narrative within the village.



Fig 6.4.1 *Re-Riot*, Photographic documentation, January 2013.

Fig 6.4.2 *Re-Riot*, Photographic documentation, January 2013.

For this work, I met with the Heritage Committee of Timespan and discussed the recent success of the *Badges* work and suggested we do a mock ‘trial’ to explore the divisions further. We all agreed this would be interesting to explore, and the committee divide into two groups, each one to argue either ‘The Clearances are Still Happening’ or ‘The Clearances are Over’. During their preparations, the question of who might objectively judge such a trial was raised and I was tasked to find someone who might have little knowledge of the Clearances and be impartial to the outcome.

At the following meeting, the date for the ‘trial’ was set, and I informed them that I had found an incredibly important judge, who was impartial, not vested in either outcome and who additionally wished to know more about the subject. I also proposed that the Committee accept the judge’s outcome as a ‘binding social contract.’ This proposition functioned like the contentious statement of the *Performative Interviews*, in that it proposed a world that the judge’s decision might possibly stand in opposition to the dominant hegemony. The Committee agreed to this ‘social contract’, and all was prepared for the trial. What I did not inform them until the moment of presenting their cases, however, was that the judges would be made up of the 24 Primary School children (the entirety of the under-12 population of the village). With fairly jovial humour to this twist in the court case, both defence and prosecuting cases presented for 20 minutes, with 5 minutes for summing-up. The mood stayed quite convivial until the youth’s decided that ‘The Clearances Are Over’ with a caveat that the Clearances should indeed be remembered, but no dwelled upon.

This ruling was the subject of much discussion in the debriefing and feedback session with the Heritage Committee and the group argued that they should discount the Judges’ decision, reasoning that the youth were “not an fully informed adults,”¹⁸ and were too young to be aware of the “essential issues.”¹⁹ This, they argued, forced them to change not only their language but also the type of information, simplifying and

¹⁸ Timespan Heritage Committee member and History On Trial participant. Helmsdale, February 8th, 2013.

¹⁹ Ibid.

“playing to feelings,”²⁰ therefore the arguments were not as complex as they could have been. Several of the members admitted playing an “adults know best”²¹ role to persuade the youth of the ‘correct’ outcome. In revealing the language and strategies they used in order to get the outcome they wanted, they began to critically assess their decision-making and curatorial mechanisms that centred upon the ‘Clearances Are Still Happening’ agenda. In other words, by placing the youth and the adults in conflict, the institutional intent was clarified, and this was important as it unraveled the commitment the institution had to a single hegemony, rather than the plurality of perspectives in the village. This event additionally revealed at how financially reliant on the Clearances narrative the village is, as it continues to bring income into the village, and this income was perceived by the adults to be more important than the youth’s alternative view on heritage and culture. In this way, working in an agonistic partnership with the institution revealed the intentions of the institution to themselves, providing the potential for transformation.



Fig 6.5.1 *History On Trial*, Photographic documentation, February 2013.
 Fig 6.5.2 *History On Trial*, Photographic documentation, February 2013.

6.1.3 *Timespan: The Movement Of Bodies*



Fig 6.6 *Climbing on The Emigrants statue*, Photographic documentation. January 2013.

The Clearances fundamentally concerned the movement of people – from the Strath of Kildonan to Helmsdale, from Scotland to other nations, as well as those descendants that come back to the village to seek out their heritage. Additionally, *The Emigrants* statue (Gerald Laing, 2007) acts as a constant reminder and reaffirmation of the Clearances’ dominance within the village. Contemporarily, there is mirror in the movement of people out of the village to larger centres seeking employment opportunities that replicated a sort of ‘economic’ Clearances. This constant flow of people *out* of the village was stemmed by the influx of (mostly English) immigrants that had moved into the village for their own economic or cultural reasons. Ironically, those very people contributing to the economics of the village are shunned as they are considered to not to adhere to the dominant Clearances narratives.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

This physical influx of bodies divides the village into ‘locals’ or ‘incomers’ – who are also broadly divided along ‘The Clearances Are Still Happening’ Vs. ‘The Clearances Are Over’ lines – and this contemporary division was the focus of the last major project of the residency: *Shinty!* (T19 – see page 150 for more information about this work). This work made full use of my physical methodology to explore and challenge this relationship. A physical methodology ran through the entirety of the project, be that via exploring the visceral nature of the riots (*Riot Act* (T11)) or physically relocating the Clearances debate to a sheep-filled field (*Re-establishing The Natural Balance* (T10)). Indeed, simply being *in situ* and physically living in the same culture informed my work. To reiterate Jackson:

For using one’s body in the same way as others in the same environment, one finds oneself informed by an understanding which may then be interpreted according to one’s own custom or bent, yet which remains grounded in the field of practical activity and thereby remains consonant with the experience of those among whom one has lived.²²

However, rather than this broad understanding of physicality, the *Shinty* work specifically engaged the population in direct physical action to explore the cultural divisions and to provide new subjectivities.



Fig 6.7 *Shinty! The Old Ways*, Photographic documentation. March 2013.

Fig 6.8 *Shinty! The New Ways*, Photographic documentation. March 2013.

Fig 6.9 Untitled Shinty Illustration from *Penny Magazine*, London. Published 1823.

Shinty is a stick-and-ball game derived from the Irish sport Hurling, and probably came to Scotland in the early part of the 1st century C.E.. It has a link with the Clearances in Helmsdale as the yearly New Year game was played in Kildonan the day William Clunes arrived. The players moved and extended the game in order to spy on Clunes, and shinty sticks were also used in the Kildonan Riots that chased Clunes from the land.²³ The game has another connection with the ‘movement of people’ during the Clearances in that the sport emigrated with the Scottish Highlanders, and in Canada evolved into the current form of Ice Hockey, where an informal game with friends is still called *shinnie*. Today, the traditional game is mostly played in the Highlands, in the Shinty League, and although Helmsdale has not contributed a team for over 20 years, it is still played casually and the school even offers it as part of Physical Education Lessons.

The activity was therefore tied to the village’s heritage, and the *Shinty* work aimed to utilise the game as a way to inquire into the relationship between locals and the incomers, by pitting each against the other in a re-creation of a Shinty match famous within the village’s history in order to decide who was *better*. This ‘better’ was intentionally vague and acted to challenge each group to dominate the other. Various ‘build-up’ events were planned (*Shinty: the old ways* (T19) and *Lunchtime Shinty* (T9)) to practice play and engage the community in the game, as well as build up team-members for the final event. Working with the Youth Club, we designed the names (The Sutherland Raiders and The Incoming Riot) as well as icons/logos for each

²² M. Jackson. (1983) ‘Knowledge of the Body’. *Man New Series*. 18:2. pp. 327 – 345. p. 341.

²³ J. Prebble. (1963) *The Highland Clearances*. London. Penguin Books.

teams, derived from historical references to the Kildonan Riots, the Sutherland family crest, and a local band of men who were arrested in protests that led up of the Cofing Acts of the 1880s. The final event took place in March and consisted of a bagpipe led parade from the centre of the town to the sports fields, where the game was played for 40 min each half. The final score was 3 to 6 for the Sutherland Raiders.

This event – via a challenge to see who might be ‘better’ (i.e. who might win) – saw two disparate groups put in direct physical contact. It was exactly this physical contact that allowed a direct shift of thinking around how each interacted with each other. To be clear, this was not an ameliorative approach that hoped to draw these two together: on the contrary, the distinction between their hegemonic orders was the very reason they engaged in the competition and why the event functioned successfully. It was *because* of their difference that they engaged, and agonistically, they became committed to the same cause: winning the game. It was an enacted metaphor of the hegemonic challenge that occurred daily *between* these two groups. In this sense, it revealed in what ways they were segregated into separate spheres and became a way to develop new relationships with each other. Importantly, it was not to ameliorate this division and ‘fix’ a relationship. This revelation and enacted metaphor allowed those engaging or watching the event to play “an active part in a project which effectively recreates the world... allowing each person to discover in his or her own personality a way of producing, out of the momentary chaos, something which will contribute to the renewal of the social order.”²⁴

This renewal of the social order was not an entrenching of the hegemony, (though, the locals were rather ebullient at their win!), but aimed to provide new insights into that social order via giving an alternative form of its expression: “an altered patterns of the body may induce new experience and provide new ideas...disruption triggers changes in bodily and mental disposition.”²⁵ This alternative, less hierarchal way to explore the topic was successful because it was predicated upon tacit, physical and personal corporeal understandings, rather than mental and informative processes framed by, and within, an institution. In other words, the participants and the viewers were not engaging in the topic inside the museum, reviewing pedagogical or abstracted positions, but in a real-time, cold and blustery field, and the physical methodology gave alternative entry points into topic of the Clearances and the subsequent incomer/local dichotomy. Similarly, the audiences of the Shinty match, watching from a distance, were still invested in the concept either by being friends/family of players, or being interested in the topic itself, and the Mirror Neurone process (understanding by doing, by imitation, and by physical observation) encapsulated the complexity of the topic.

The game, away from the institution and on the field, showed the hegemony of the Clearances was enacted every day and had consequences to those that held a different perspective. Further too, the participant’s active agency in either capitulating the dominant hegemony of the village or resisting it was put in sharp relief. In this sense, the physical offered an innate and immediate comprehension that could provide an effective potential for transformation.

6.1.4 Timespan: Conclusion

This project’s use of a conflictual methodology allowed us – as collaborators and participants – to investigate the topic of the Clearances and the different perspectives upon them, to problematize our relationship to the issues (and to each other) and propose different responses to those issues. The content of the conflict differed depending on the contexts, but each work functioned to propose a multiplicity of perspectives that ensured broader thinking and engagement on the topic. Had I not

²⁴ M. Jackson. (1983) ‘Knowledge of the Body’. *Man New Series*. 18:2. pp. 327 – 345. p. 330.

²⁵ M. Jackson. (1983) ‘Knowledge of the Body’. *Man New Series*. 18:2. pp. 327 – 345. p. 330.

revealed the pre-existing conflicts, the dominant hegemony would remain unchallenged and a 'more' democratic realm would not exist. Additionally, a reassessment of institutional intent proposed to find new ways of providing ownership for – and criticism of – the dominant orders, and how it limited a plurality of perspectives. In regards to the institution of Timespan, this meant a reflection by them on in what ways they were implicated in presenting a dominant cultural position – and how that might stand in contrast to – or actively repress – other cultural perspective in the village. Lastly, a physical repositioning of the conflict ensured a further critique of the dominant hegemony out with the institution and a broader examination into the agency of each person's relationship with that hegemony.

As such, conflict was productive in not only expanding dialogue and critique but also formulating a structure through which participants had ownership of the projects, but also implemented an institutional critique. In short, it provided a mechanism in which participants were made self-aware and active, in which they gained agency, institutional power was challenged, hegemonies were revealed and challenged so that new subjectivities could emerge.

6.2 Glasgow Life: Policy Artefacts

Glasgow Life (GL) is "charity that delivers cultural, sporting and learning activities on behalf of Glasgow City Council."²⁶ This service had originally been an integrated part of the council as the Department of Culture and Leisure Services, but was separated out in 2007 allowing it to operate as a charity.²⁷ Much of this separation is superficial as there is still a great overlap of policy and facilities, and GL are still mandated by the Glasgow City Council to provide culture and leisure activities within the city, including museums, art galleries, art festivals, sports facilities, sports events (including the recent 2014 Commonwealth Games), education and outreach teams, cultural development, as well as special projects – for example the recent construction of the award-winning Riverside Museum (Zaha Hadid, 2011).

My introduction to working with Glasgow Life was with GoMA during their 3rd biannual Social Justice programme that led to the *Legacy...* work mentioned above. Despite 'kidnapping' institutionally powerful curators/councillors and dumping them in muddy fields, I have had a productive relationship with them over the years and as my research concerns artworks within institutional settings, it seemed natural for me to suggest working with them on my current research. I therefore approached Mark O'Neill, Director of Policy and Research at Glasgow Life, in October 2012 and asked if they would support an in-situ residence at their new, purpose-built offices located on 220 High Street, Glasgow. My original proposal read:

I propose a residency in 220 High Street, one that sees that building as a community and uses the language of engagement to explore ways to use the arts [and cultural] policies of the council on the council. I am interested in how this might offer an exploration of the processes of participation and its interrelation of support with policies, but also offer critical reflection for myself, to my practice and to the council/Glasgow Life.²⁸

The Directorate discussed my proposal in November 2013 and unanimously agreed that I should be allowed, under my own direction and with free-range (within reason), to undertake the research within their open-plan offices. They had allocated me a small

²⁶ 'What We Do.' (n.d.)Glasgow Life Website <http://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/about-us/welcome/whatwedo/Pages/default.aspx>. (Available online – Accessed 13 February 2015)

²⁷ This practice has become popular in many of Local Authorities within the UK – enough to coin the phrase 'gone to trust' to describe the process – with Liverpool and Lincoln being some of the most recent bodies to enact this strategy.

²⁸ E-mail from author to Mark O'Neill, Head of Policy & Research, Glasgow Life, 12 October 2012

booth as a studio, and while I was not financially supported, I had access to office equipment and the ideological support of the Directorate in order to facilitate the project. The project lasted from April 2013 to July 2013.

6.2.1 Glasgow Life: The Culture Police

On previous residency projects, I have immersed myself within the daily lives of participants – i.e. going to pubs with villagers, taking part in social clubs or joining sports teams in order to gain insight to the context (and content) of the place. In this project, however, the daily lives of the participants was limited by the working hours and by the building itself, the context therefore became the structures of the institution – both physical and operational. Additionally, drawing from the insight about the place of institutions within participatory practices from my time at Timespan, I wished to make the *institution* itself the focus of my inquiry. I felt this would align closely to my second research question (How can conflict reveal and challenge ‘institutional intent’ within participatory art projects?) and therefore the works I developed looked for ways to challenge the smooth functioning of the institution to provide new subjectivities.

At the beginning of my project, I had written to the Policy & Research Manager, Bridget Sly, asking her to meet and discuss Andy Hewitt’s supposition that artists operating under the ‘Social Inclusion’ remit of government-funded participatory practices are merely ‘service providers’ of neoliberal policies.²⁹ As a policy manager of a government-funded organisation that funded participatory practices, I was interested in her response to Hewitt’s suggestion and asked about: “Glasgow Life’s cultural police [*sic*] and how it affected participatory projects.”³⁰ In the email, I had mistyped an ‘e’ instead of a ‘y’ when writing ‘policy’, thus accidentally inventing Glasgow Life’s ‘Cultural Police’, leading a humorous exchange with Sly about the form, function and uniform of such an imagined police force, whether or not they existed within Glasgow Life, and what policies they might enforce. This mistake almost certainly revealed my own misconceptions of policy’s function as something oppressive, but on meeting Sly and other members of her team, we had a lengthy discussion on the role and purpose of policy within a Local Authority context. She suggested that policy should instead “try to help [staff] understand the environment in which we operate and what it is we’re collectively trying to work towards.”³¹ In other words, policy should act as a supportive role, rather than a dictatorial one.³² This shift in comprehension about policy’s function resonated with the notion of ‘institutional intent’ that I had reached in Helmsdale.

To clarify whether or not policy was acting as that supportive role, I wanted to explore *how* and *what* the institution wanted from its policy in the first place – i.e. its institutional intent. To do this, I initiated several projects that challenged how ‘policy language’ operated to obscure, rather than reveal intentions (*Policy Elf* (GL3), *Bulmalarky Bingo* (GL2), *Building Legacy*, part of the *Office Olympics – The Wealthy Common*: (GL13)). These were eagerly taken up by the staff in the office, with many saying they had direct experience of the lack of clarity that emerged from such amorphous statements as ‘ensure legacy’, ‘best practice’ and ‘build capacity’. Through these works, I discovered that, at that time, Glasgow Life did not have a cultural policy, and instead was operating from a mission statement from the Glasgow Life Strategic Plan, 2012/2013

²⁹ A. Hewitt (2011) ‘Privatising the Public: Three rhetorics of art’s public good in ‘Third Way’ cultural policy’ in *Art & the Public Sphere*, 1:1. pp.19 – 36.

³⁰ Personal E-mail to author from Bridget Sly, Glasgow Life’s Policy & Research Manager, 3 April 2013.

³¹ Personal E-mail to author from Bridget Sly, Glasgow Life’s Policy & Research Manager, 3 June 2013.

³² Although, she in the same email she also said: “Policy can sometimes have an element of compliance to it (e.g. an equality policy would communicate the legislative/regulatory requirements that the organization and its staff need to operate within). It can also be about standardising an approach (e.g. an HR recruitment policy) – though I would argue that when it’s standardising an approach it’s more of a ‘procedure’ than a ‘policy’.” Personal E-mail to author from Bridget Sly, Glasgow Life’s Policy & Research Manager, 3 June 2013.

that stated Glasgow Life aimed to: “Inspire Glasgow’s citizens and visitors to lead *richer* and *more* active lives through culture and sport.”³³

To draw attention to how – or how not – this operated as a ‘cultural policy’, I developed *Cultural Strategy* (GL4 – see page 153 for more information about this work). In this work, I asked individual staff of GL if they would do a jumping-jack or push-up, and if they did, I would pay them 10p, thus making them both ‘richer’ and ‘more active’. This barter of wealth for action was technically functioning within the contemporaneous policy of GL, and yet also revealed the lack of clarity on what was meant by ‘richer’ or ‘more active’. This work was the most actively engaged in of all the works of this project and I infer from this a tacit understanding of the critique. It was able to reveal a lack of institutional clarity on the institution’s intentions towards the citizens of Glasgow and challenge how it was functioning with such an unclear focus.

This conflict against the institutional structure was successful in eliciting responses and reflection on ‘policy’ from not only staff within the structures, but also those managers that design the structures. Discussing this work with Mark O’Neill, Director of Policy and Research at Glasgow Life, he agreed that the lack of a succinct policy was problematic and that the cultural policy document was already years late in its creation due to structural shifts within the institution. Regarding my works exploring policy he has said:

I was in the process of redrafting out policies during your time with us. Your residency reinforced my awareness of the opaque language and unarticulated assumptions that most cultural policies make. This definitely made me even more determined to make the tacit explicit and as far as humanly possible to use everyday language....³⁴

In a further email exchange, after I had commented on his draft cultural policy, he replied: “I can now guarantee that you will be able to demonstrate direct impact on the cultural policy of a major UK city.”³⁵ These simple and playful conflicts were successful in that they challenged the institution’s policies and drew attention to its lack of clear intention and impacted institutional change. This was not an activist-led change, as I did not want to guide the direction on the ‘right’ way policy should be written, rather only draw attention to its possible failings and leave the ‘potential for transformation’ for the institution itself.

6.2.2 Glasgow Life: A Very Big Divider

As GL existed to provide cultural and sporting activities to the citizens of Glasgow – and as my mistype of policy/police exposed my interest in the acts of *cultural policing* – I was curious to explore how GL was culturally policing the city’s citizens. While a sufficient inquiry into this would be outside the scope of a short 3-month residency, I *could* explore how they policed their workforce, who were, also, citizens of Glasgow and infer a mirror between how GL approached its staff to how it approached the citizens. I therefore wished to explore how a ‘cultural police’ may or may not exist within the management of the institution. I reasoned that if the ‘cultural police’ were to be found, it would more visible in the operation of the institution itself, rather than into the abstracted language of policy. This inquiry took its conceptual inspiration from Interpretive Policy Analysis, which is a methodology for interpreting and revealing policy’s meaning:

³³ Glasgow Life Strategic Plan, 2012/2013. Glasgow: Glasgow Life.

³⁴ Personal E-mail from Mark O’Neill, Head of Policy and Research, Glasgow Life, in email to author, 3 July 2013.

³⁵ Personal E-mail from Mark O’Neill, Head of Policy and Research, Glasgow Life, in email to author, 13 July 2013.

Interpretive policy analysis...is informed by post-positivist social theory which attends to matters of representation through language, text and symbol in the constitution of social life...it is distinctive in attending to the interpretations policy makers themselves make.³⁶

Within this study, I was specifically interested in 'Policy Artefacts':

Agency artefacts are show to symbolise tacitly known meanings as well as those which are part of a policy's explicit language. Not only do implementers and other situational actors interpret these artefacts; the policy and these interpretations maybe 'read' as a 'text' about societal values and identity...[calling] on us to ask; what does policy mean; to whom, aside from its drafters and implementers, does it have meaning; and how do various interpretations of meaning affect policy implementation... how does policy accrue meaning?³⁷

and:

Dress codes, agency names, program and space design, and so forth are artefacts of an organisation. The artefacts embody the values and beliefs of the organisation, and they are meaningful for organisational members in ways that are particular to their context. *Artefacts, together with their underlying beliefs and values, constitute the culture of the organisation.*³⁸

Interpretive Policy Analysis (IPA) then looks at the activities and actions of an institution to reveal the 'true' meanings and intentions of an organisation, rather than the stated or explicit meanings. The approach operates similarly to Latour's Actor Network Theory in that the systems being examined "could be analyzed and interpreted through the interactions of actors and networks."³⁹ Utilising these approaches is not to suggest the implicit and the explicit 'culture' of an organisation are necessarily mismatched, but rather that they *can* be, and it is the role of the Interpretive Policy Analyst to explore that (possible) mismatch. I therefore became interested in the interpretations of policy artefacts that constituted the culture of Glasgow Life and if these interpretations revealed anything about the intentions of the institution towards its staff. Rather than the policy 'proper' – the aspirational and supportive mandate of policy – I was interested in exposing the implicit societal values and identity of the organisation's physical structure that could reveal implicit power-structures within the institution. This took place in several works (*A Tale of Two Fridges* (GL9) and *Banners To Stand Under Together* (GL12)) that inquired into both the physical and social structures apparent within the 220 High Street office building. It was, however, most acutely revealed in *A Very Big Divider* (GL8 – see page 154 for more information about this work).

This work explored the design of 220 High Street as a 'policy artefact', specifically the 'open-plan' model arranged to encourage equality and a lack of hierarchy. This open-plan approach had been applied throughout the building. I noted, however, that the Directorate section was separated out and hidden from the rest of the staff by a set of drawers and cupboards that was incongruous with the overt commitment to the 'equality' within the rest of the building. As such, I created a sign that read 'A Very Big

³⁶ R. Freeman, (n.d.) *Social Science and Public Policy* (<http://www.richardfreeman.info/answer.php?id=18>) n.d. (Available online – Accessed 12 July 2013).

³⁷ D. Yanow (1993) 'The communication of Policy Meanings: Implantation as interpretation and text' *Policy Sciences* 26, pp. 41 – 61. p. 41.

³⁸ D. Yanow (1993) 'The communication of Policy Meanings: Implantation as interpretation and text' *Policy Sciences* 26, pp. 41 – 61 (Emphasis added)

³⁹ Actor Network Theory. (n.d.) www.wikipedia.com

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Actor%E2%80%93network_theory) n.d. (Available online – accessed 12 November, 2015)

Divider' and placed on both sides of the divider as a way to highlight the physical division, but also the social and institutional divisions. I had intended it to be quite a humorous critique, but found many of the staff were take aback that such a blatant statement of the obvious had been made and I was asked if I had "got into trouble."⁴⁰



Fig 6.10 *A Very Big Divider*, Photographic documentation, January 2013.

This comment from the staff revealed the institution's power structure was based on a traditional top-down and repressive management culture and that was at odds with its apparent outward commitment to equality and egalitarianism. The physical divider was therefore mirroring the structure of management and the sign upset the smooth functioning of the hegemony: it only revealed the 'cultural policing' (i.e. a managerial intent) but also the disjunction between the institution as 'collection of policies' and the institution as 'a collection of people' – specifically how the former controls the latter. In this sense, conflict was productive within this participatory art projects in that it made "visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate, aiming to give voice within the existing hegemony."⁴¹ Highlighting the true hierarchical management structure – as opposed to the supposed commitment to egalitarianism – allowed the institution to be seen in a new light, and in that, it offered the potential for transformation.

6.2.3 Glasgow Life: Conflict Physicality

The top-down management structure and its relationship to the design of the offices was also examined with an overtly physical approach. These works (*Scream In A Lift* (GL7), *DeBureaucratise Hegemonic Authority* (GL10), *Throw A Ball At A Colleague* (GL11), and *Office Olympics – The Wealthy Common* (GL13)) all sought to propose new physical relationships to the institution and to critique the social and organisational structures.



Fig 6.11 *Scream In A Lift*, Photographic documentation, April 2014.

Fig 6.12 *Glasgow Life Fight Club*, Poster, June 2014.

Fig 6.13 *Move Different: Think Different* (as part of *Office Olympics*), Photographic documentation, May 2014.

⁴⁰ Anonymous Glasgow Life Employee at 220 High Street to author, May 19th, 2015.

⁴¹ C. Mouffe. (2007) 'Agonistic Politics and Artistic Practices' (Lecture) Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow, 2nd March.

The control of the corporeal within the office via dress-codes, lack of opportunities of movement (one should only sit/walk), as well as expectations of working behaviour – which are policed vis-à-vis the open-plan office – cement an intellectually abstracted hegemony, and dislocates the proprioception of self from self-hood. Via a soft power, the body and its individualising ability is repressed in favour of a more corporate, controlled existence that values an abstracted, intellectual presence – i.e. a non-corporeal hegemony).⁴² Consequently, I decided to strategically enact a series of overtly physical works to critique of the formalised, controlled, and corporate institution and provide the employees a way to stand aside from the institutional processes while still being physically present. It was a methodology of subversion and by encouraging the participants to be ‘physically active’ – in terms of a generative action, rather than merely corporeally present – they challenged the normative experiences of the corporate realm, offering alternative readings not only of space, but also of interactions and understandings of power.

These works also drew on notions of ‘policy artefacts’ for inspiration, specifically how the ‘open-plan’ office acted as ‘theatre of surveillance’ or panopticon that perpetuates power without requiring its active enforcement.⁴³ As such, the corporate behaviour within the office was self-censored – i.e. anything apart from walking and/or sitting at one’s desk was suspect. To challenge this, I looked to the floor as something one can’t help engage with and taped a series of ‘hop-scotch’ squares around the office. *Move Differently: Think Differently* (part of *The Office Olympics* (GL13)) was an opportunity to re-think the workplace as a place of play. These were mostly ignored, with staff veering around them for days until a member of the Directorate skipped through the boxes on the way to a meeting. This simple, physical act was witnessed by staff members and read as a tacit permission to engage in these activities: “Seeing directorate doing hopscotch breaks down a barrier!” and “playing hop-sctoch (sic) going to and from meetings was a welcome distraction.”⁴⁴ These physical acts therefore both highlighted that management needed to ‘give permission’, but that also they provided a distraction and different perspective from the cerebral world demanded by the corporate space.

This was also addressed in *Scream In A Lift* (GL7 – see page 154 for more information about this work) which inquired into the lack of private space, away from the tyranny of visibility enacted by panopticon of the open-plan office. I had noticed that the elevator was the only space one could feasibly be alone, and so invited staff members to use the nebulously private/public space of the elevator as a place to vent frustrations at the tyranny of visibility. The concept of the work was to provide a counter-point to corporate environment via physicality. It was well-attended and the staff began taking the opportunity to do this work without the structured events I offered and one would often hear the faint scream emanating from between the walls as the lift descended. The profoundly physical act of being in an enclosed space and screaming offered a highly un-corporate moment in a day that was otherwise quite physically restrained. It also provided an opportunity to forge new relationships with colleagues in a non-hierarchical manner, for example, Directorate PAs mixing with Marketing team for extended periods of time in the elevator. The combination of physicality with the blurring of hierarchical boundaries provided new insights on the work environment, and was able to expand this effectively in the final work: *Glasgow Life Fight Club* (GL15 – see page 157 for more information about this work).

⁴² Foucault, M. (1979) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York: Random House.

⁴³ “The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad [...] to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power.” M. Foucault (1979) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York: Random House. 1979. p. 204.

⁴⁴ Unnamed GL participants digital survey responses (No. 14 & No. 18). These were collected via SurveyMonkey.com July 2014. A complete record of them is included in Appendix 1.

In this work, I similarly aimed to provide a space to be profoundly physical in contrast to the normalised, bureaucratic sphere and would offer a context to shed frustrations as well as have different (corporeal) responses and interactions with colleagues. The sexualised poster and its location (the dark, car-park basement) was a hint at a wilder, bestial state of being, and this provided an alternative position to the sterile nature of the Glasgow Life offices: the panopticon of the open-plan offices had been eradicated. It was, still, however, at 'work', and this offered a new reading of interactions and understandings of power. In doing this, it provided an alternative structure to dominant hegemony and provided both moments of resistance but also potentials of transformation via new perspectives. In other words, it revealed the form of 'cultural policing' that occurred within the institution by its conflictual, corporeal methodology.

As my work seeks to induce the 'possibility of transformation', these conflicts – in the form of alternative readings, interactions and understandings – were devised not as direct critiques of Glasgow Life *per se*, and were not premised on any desire for a specific outcome, especially those of a political nature. Instead, the projects aimed to make "visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate,"⁴⁵ including the panopticon's smooth (non-corporeal) functioning. Physicality, by contrast, provided a mechanism through which this functioning was revealed but also a way through which its critique was tacitly – and productively – understood.

6.2.4 Glasgow Life: Conclusion

My project at Glasgow Life had been premised on an idea that saw the "building as a community and uses the language of engagement to explore ways to use the arts [and cultural] policies of the council on the council."⁴⁶ The idea was to enact a 'participatory project' on a Local Authority in order to explore *how* those who support and sustain participatory projects in the 'public realm' also *receive* those participatory projects. In this sense 220 High Street became a mirror to the 'public realm' outside the offices and the challenges to their policies and hierarchical functioning will also, in the longer-term, effect the public realm of the city, as seen in their re-writing of cultural policy.

The work was not to politically challenge Glasgow Life, and that the Directorate welcomed my project suggests willingness and desire to critically examine its own objectives and intentions in regards to participatory practices (and cultural policy) and they are to be commended for that. The conflictual participatory works were able to highlight institutional intent that contributed to the institution clarifying its cultural policy. These conflictual participatory projects were also able to reveal the hierarchical structures of the institution as they truly operated and offer the staff mechanisms for critique and challenge to those structures, thus encouraging a more democratic sphere. Lastly, a conflictual physicality gave alternative perspectives on the corporeal policing that occurred within the corporate environment, allowing alternative hegemonies to develop.

A tangential 'telling detail' emerged near the beginning of this project and has lingered with me throughout this research and it raises a key issue about institutionally instigated participatory projects which is important to highlight. I had been told by a Senior Management member that Glasgow Life was a "...busy office. It will be difficult to make art with people here. People are always rushing about with important things to do."⁴⁷ Implicitly, this suggested that participatory art projects are for those who are not busy: for the realm of leisure or for those with time to spare. Critically, this implies a value judgement about lives of those who live in the communities that Glasgow Life wishes to partake in participatory art practices – such as those in the Legacy... project

⁴⁵ C. Mouffe. (2007) 'Agonistic Politics and Artistic Practices' (Lecture) Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow, 2nd March.

⁴⁶ E-mail from author to Mark O'Neill, Head of Policy & Research, Glasgow Life, 12 October 2012.

⁴⁷ Conversation with Sarah Munro, Head of Arts, Glasgow Life, 22 April 22, 2013.

above. I was not able to address this issue within this project, but I did explore the judgements an institution makes of *who* a participatory art project is for in more depth on the Rua Red project, which occurs after the section below.

6.3 GMRC: Biting The Hand That Feeds & Glasgow Life Choir: Testament

This section elides two related projects that both concern the preparedness of institutions and participants to engage in productive conflict, and despite having different contexts, they both emerge from my relationship with Glasgow Life. The main difference between the projects was that the Glasgow Museums and Resource Centre (GMRC) project was commissioned – i.e. the institution had *invited* me into their context – whereas the Glasgow Life Choir project was *self-initiated* and I approached them. They were also both relatively short (about one week long) and while I go into more depth of the GRMC project, this brevity of engagement highlights an issue about ‘parachuting-in’ an artist to a community context.

In 1978, Su Braden argued that participatory projects should be long-term and entrenched into the community and railed against the idea of short-term engagements that she saw as “alienatory and temporary.”⁴⁸ She suggested funders and institutions needed to take into account longevity and sustainability in order to have non-colonial or unethical engagements with people. I would agree with this in principle, but also concur with Bishop who has argued that “participants are more than capable of dealing with artists”⁴⁹ and suggests that to assume a lack of agency on the part of the participants to be able to deny working with an artist can be as offensive as an intentionally unethical approach. In other words, it is not necessarily a ‘temporal’ issue, but rather one of intent and structural support. This was true of the projects below, which were largely unsuccessful due to a lack of systems to productively incorporate a participatory approach. To be sure, more time could have assisted in the *development* of structures but the key issue here is that all the time in the world cannot assist in developing an ethical participatory project if people do not *want* to participate. This is not about ‘changing people’s minds’ but about transparency of intent, communication and ethical exchange so that people can make informed decisions. In both of them, conflict helped to reveal the lack of these structures. In this sense, conflict was productive, despite not resulting in any completed ‘participatory’ art work.

6.3.1 GMRC: Biting The Hand That Feeds

In 2012, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation⁵⁰ initiated the Our Museums Project. This project aims to “facilitate a process of development and organisational change within museums and galleries that are committed to active partnership with their communities.”⁵¹ In 2013, Glasgow Museums – a department of Glasgow Life – applied for a grant under the Our Museums initiative and was successful in receiving funds to “use reflective practice to facilitate organisational change, focusing on Glasgow Museums’ management team, but also working with front-of-house and other staff groups.”⁵² This project was based at the GMRC, and the project’s director, Laura Gutierrez, was interested in implementing an artist-in-residence project to assist this ‘reflective practice’. She heard about my project at the Glasgow Life main headquarters

⁴⁸ S. Braden. (1978) *Artists And People*. London. Kegan Paul Books. p. 124.

⁴⁹ C. Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London, Verso. p. 26.

⁵⁰ Paul Hamlyn also funded the related Artworks project which looks to: “support the continuing professional development of artists working in participatory settings,” ‘About Artworks’. Paul Hamlyn Website (n.d.) <http://www.phf.org.uk/page.asp?id=746>. Undated. (Available online – Accessed 14 October 2014).

⁵¹ ‘Our Museum: Communities and Museums as Active Partners’. (n.d.) Paul Hamlyn Website <http://www.phf.org.uk/page.asp?id=1125>. (Available online – Accessed 16 February 2015).

⁵² ‘Grants Made’ Paul Hamlyn Foundation Website (n.d.) <http://www.phf.org.uk/page.asp?id=1586>. (Available online – Accessed 16 February 2015).

(220 High Street) and invited me to do a 'micro-residency' with them as a test for this larger artist-in-residence. I agreed to do a short, week-long project in July 2013.

GMRC is located on the suburban outskirts of South-East Glasgow, on the Nitshill Industrial estate. It houses Glasgow City Council's collection of artworks, artefacts, museum objects, historical objects, natural and scientific history items in a large, purpose-built warehouse to store the second-largest civic collection in the UK. The building is mainly a storage facility, but there are also conservation and installation workshops as well as offices for archivists, conservators, logistics and museum management, as well as administrative and janitorial staff. While there is some public access, it is predominantly by appointment only. Additionally, because it is located within an industrial estate, with no external cafes or public spaces, there are few reasons to venture outside, and so the staff are a relatively contained, temporary community within the building. This means that there are also few opportunities for the staff to engage with the community of Nitshill, which is relatively socio-economically deprived.

For the first work of this short project, I applied an Interpretive Policy Analysis on the design/architecture of the operations that helped to reveal the disjunction between the desires of the people of an organisation and the structures of that organisation. This took the form of the work *Security Risk/Citizen of Glasgow* (GMRC1 – see page 169 for more information about this work) which emerged because, even though I was an official invitee of the Glasgow Museums, I was unable to have an access-card to enter the building. I was unable to have an access card because I did not have an employee number. I could not have an employee number because I was not an employee, but a guest. I was therefore unable to enter to building unless I had a personal escort from one of Our Museums staff, nor could I leave the offices without a similar escort. In other words, while the people of the institution wished to encourage reflective consideration on how to facilitate organisational change via an artist-in-resident, the structures of the organisation itself did not allow that artist to enter the building to be 'in resident'. The *Security Risk/Citizen of Glasgow* work then highlighted the two, incompatible systems – one that desired change and one that could not accommodate that desire. Despite this incompatibility, I forged ahead with the project and indeed made this the subject of the works.

As the project was very short, with little time for research, I employed many of the strategies I had utilised at Glasgow Life, focusing on a physical methodology that hoped to provide new subjectivities within the bureaucratic structure of the GMRC offices. These included sports-like games (*Floor Games* (GMRC3), *Tracers* (GMRC4)) and were somewhat successful in suggesting new relationships and power structures via physical conflict, as in the Glasgow Life project at 220 High Street. However, the works I will focus in this section concerned the concept of Public Space, specifically about the physical negotiation of public space.

Chantal Mouffe suggests that "public spaces are the terrain where consensus can emerge: the battleground in which different hegemonic articulations are confronted...they are plural... where there always exists a multiplicity of struggle."⁵³ This multiplicity and oppositions of hegemonic orders are at the crux of my practice, as well as often being the context and content of my practice. Considering this, I was curious as to how notions of public and private space could be put in conflict within this participatory project that might offer a 'different hegemonic articulation' of the institution. This occurred in two works, the first being a series of *Walks* (GMRC2 & GMRC8 – see pages 170 & 172 for more information about these works) and the

⁵³ C. Mouffe. (2007) 'Agonistic Politics and Artistic Practices' (Lecture) Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow, 2nd March.

second being *Common Rooms/Commonsroom* (GMRC6 – see page 171 for more information about this work).

The notion behind *Walks* aimed to give the staff opportunities to leave the comfort of their offices and walk through the suburbs and interstitial lands of Nitshill. Along these walks I asked questions relating *who* owned the collection, and *how* they could access it, challenging the staff to consider the citizens of Nitshill as also worthy of the priceless collections within the GMRC, rather than just those who visit the museums of central Glasgow. This work aimed to place a multiplicity of hegemonic orders in conceptual conflict – the structures of Glasgow Life; the power dynamics of GMRC; the challenge for reflection from myself; the daily-lives of those in Nitshill – instead of the singular, dominant hegemonic order of the institution. In other words, I was attempting to reveal the plurality of public spaces in which GMRC operated. It was hoped that putting these hegemonic orders into conflict could provide both an opportunity for reflection as well as the potential for change. While the concept for this conflict was sound, and previous projects had shown how productive conflict could provide new subjectivities, I was aware that those that participated on the walks only superficially engaged in my suggested conflict. They seemed only tangentially interested in the potentials for shifts in thinking and reflection. I thought this odd for an organisation that was interested in “reflective practice to facilitate organisational change.”⁵⁴



Fig 6.14 *Walks*, Photographic documentation, July 2013.



Fig 6.15 *Common Room/Commonsroom*, Photographic documentation, July 2013.

The complexities of the notion of ‘change’ was highlighted in the second work relating to public space: *Common Rooms/Commonsroom*. As the staff did not venture into the public realm outside the building, it became apparent that the staffroom of GMRC was the public space for the employees – a place where the managers, cleaners, archivists, etc., all had access. I noted that that the room was in fact rigidly socially segregated and certain groups of people sat at certain tables: the cleaners sat in the bottom left corner; archivists sat at the large central table; administrative staff mostly stood, and there was little movement out of those demarcations. The public space within the institution therefore did not offer any opportunity to negotiate nor confront different articulations of the hegemony, as it had been ‘fixed’ into compartments. I therefore aimed to challenge the hegemonic articulations and propose a plurality of articulations via the examining of this space. To do this, I altered the arrangement of the tables and chairs of the staffroom, forcing new exchanges and relationships into existence. The old hegemony no longer existed as the structure of the room had changed.

Confronted with this change and challenge for new relationships to emerge, however, the staff rearranged the room *exactly* back into its original arrangement in less than 24 hours. On one hand the agency of the staff to exert their will is commendable and proves Bishop’s point that a community can and will deny working with an artist should they not want to. On the other hand, however, the lack of a context that would

⁵⁴ ‘Grants Made’ Paul Hamlyn Foundation Website (n.d.) <http://www.phf.org.uk/page.asp?id=1586>. (Available online – Accessed 16 February 2015).

encourage them to inquire into alternative hegemonies can be seen as problematic, as it highlighted disjunction between one order that wished to evoke 'reflective organisational change' and another order who does not want that 'reflective organisational change'. In this sense the project emphasised that conflict can indeed assist in providing new subjectivities as well as examining into institutional intent, but further preparatory work is needed to ensure that the institution (as a whole) as well as the participants are both prepared for conflict, as well as the potential for transformation if offers. This concerns the organisational structures of the commissioning institution which can include communication to the entire institution about a project's intent, practical issues of access, and time for engagement as well as involving everyone in a general awareness of a participatory project's intent.

6.3.2 Glasgow Life Choir: Testament

A similar conclusion was reached on the *Testament* (GLC1 – see page 179 for more information about this work) project but rather than concerning the organisational structures, it looked at interpersonal structures. As participation involves human beings engaging with each other and as "humans can only ever successfully learn about themselves through engagement with another,"⁵⁵ there is an ethical imperative to explore the power hierarchies that exist between groups/individuals, and this project assisted in highlighting those ethical ramifications.

The Glasgow Life Choir (GLC) is made up of staff members across the Glasgow Life services (arts, sports, education, marketing, etc.) who meet monthly after work to sing together. I had contacted them about possibly collaborating and they were, initially, excited about working with me after hearing about my residency at 220 High Street. They invited me to a workshop in February, suggesting I give a presentation on what sort of project we might do together. Considering the success of the conflictual approach I had used at High Street, I suggested that we write and perform our own song about conflict within Glasgow Life and sing it back to both their colleagues and to their bosses. On hearing this, they declined to participate: they explained they did not want to expose themselves nor critique the organisation that employs them. This marked a clear ethical understanding that I, as a single artist, have the choice to put myself into a conflictual position with my own foreknowledge and support to cope with what that conflict might engender, but unless the structures of support exist, it would be problematic to put other people into a situation that might expose them to censure. This contrasts sharply with my *A Very Big Divider* project at 220 High Street where I, as a non-employee of the organisation, could be overtly critical of its management.

Considering this, I therefore approached the Directorate of Glasgow Life, as heads of the institution, and suggested a similar project to them (a choir that could sing about the conflicts they had with their employees), but they, too, declined (with the Director herself writing to me) reasoning that they had no interest, nor time in the project. Inferred in this email was a question about the appropriateness for high-level management to be seen to engage in such a public presentation about their staff. This made me realise that these 'powerful' individuals also had responsibilities that engaging in such a project might hinder, and instigating conflict would not be productive in providing a potential for transformation, but rather promote discord and possible censure. Here, too, there was an ethical concern about instigating conflict without appropriate structures to ensure that each individual was appropriately supported throughout – and after – the project. This operated in contrast to the *Fight Club* which had emerged out of longer-term relationships with individuals within the institution, and with whom an ethical reciprocity existed.

⁵⁵ V. Hollows (2013) 'The Performance of Internal Conflict and The Art of Activism' in *Museum Management and Curatorship* 28:1. pp. 35 – 53 (Special Issue: *Working Through Conflict In Museums: Museums, Objects and Participatory Democracy*).

While the Glasgow Life Choir project was a ‘failure’ in the sense that the participatory project did not result in an aesthetic work and never evolved beyond the planning stage, it did reveal that productive conflict can only occur if the correct criteria and support structures for individuals within the institution are in place for conflict to exist, productively.

6.3.3 GMRC: *Biting The Hand That Feeds & Glasgow Life Choir: Testament: Conclusion*

Each of these two projects concerned the appropriateness of instigating conflict, either to an ‘institution’ or to ‘people’. One involved structures, the other involved individuals and, while the relationships between ‘people’ and ‘institutions’ are undoubtedly complexly interwoven, understanding of the difference between these is an important distinction when working within an institutional setting. One concerns the abstracted systems of power that can be ethically challenged directly; the other concerns people whose lives also exist beyond those systems. In both these projects conflict was productive in that it provided a more nuanced understanding of the ethics of participatory projects, specifically about how and when one can implement conflict and to whom – and, importantly, when it is inappropriate. It was appropriate to challenge *systems*, but it becomes more complicated when challenging *people* in regards to ethics, as those people could face censure or suffer adversely from a conflict that was my own instigation, rather than theirs. Additionally, in attempting to challenge systems, one needs to ensure that there are structures that will allow that conflict to happen in a productive, agonistic manner, rather than an activist, antagonistic manner. In other words, conflict can indeed be productive in providing new subjectivities, challenging institutional hierarchies, presenting alternative hegemonies and assisting in the creation of a democratic sphere, however, unless the supporting structures are prepared for conflict beforehand (or, if there is time, to prepare for conflict *during* the project), then conflict and all its potential positive possibilities cannot occur. This was explored in greater depth in the following section that unravels my residency at Rua Red in Dublin.

6.4 Rua Red: *Things Will Change*

Rua Red is a council-run arts venue in Tallaght, a suburb of Dublin. The director had seen an exhibition that contained documentation of my *Legacy...* work and had initially made contact with me in November 2012 via email:

You don't know me nor will you know our arts centre but I do know your work and we would love to work with you if you are interested? Pretty much that's it in a nutshell, every year we try and focus on a project that has a *broader community context...*but we are always up for pretty much anything. So if you are interested in this very vague project with an arts centre you won't of heard of in Dublin then I would be delighted to discuss further.⁵⁶

In this email, she said she was interested in developing something similar to Shop of Possibilities (SoP) project by South London Gallery.⁵⁷ I had previously worked on the SoP in a very successful series of projects and was excited to re-visit that methodology of participation and so I replied to the email saying that I would indeed be interested in a discussion. I was invited to Tallaght for a short 2-day research trip in April 2013 and I stayed in a hotel near the arts centre, spending my time exploring the local area and amenities, as well as researching the various community activities within Tallaght and Rua Red itself that could be accessed when developing a ‘broader community’ project.

⁵⁶ Email from Karen Phillips, Executive Director of Rua Red to author, November 17th, 2012. (Emphasis added).

⁵⁷ See <http://www.southlondongallery.org/page/theshopofpossibilities> for more details on this project.

I also discovered Tallaght has two major forces within the town – the local shopping centre (The Square) and the seat of the South Dublin County Council. Curiously, Rua Red was located almost exactly equidistant from both of these institutions, and was interested in how the ‘arts’ was – literally – situated between the main social (governing) context and main capitalist (market) context of the town. My initial proposal explored how conflict might be able to unravel the relationship between these different forces, and so proposed a “series of events, pop-up events, tours, installations and off-site projects that explore the social space of the immediate area surrounding Rua Red,”⁵⁸ and the director agreed. The project would be a six-week residency project, and would culminate on Sept 14th, 2013.

6.4.1 Rua Red: Rethinking Approaches

Within the first few days of me starting the project, it became quickly apparent that the site surrounding the gallery was a flawed focus because very few people used the area. The vast majority of the population lived/worked/socialised quite a distance away from the arts centre, on the various housing estates, and those that did use the immediate area were pre-existing gallery visitors (and so not part of this ‘broader community context’ that had been suggested). Additionally, while there were indeed various community activities that occurred at Rua Red – music classes, Saturday morning arts clubs for young children, movie nights for over 55s, dance classes for pre-teens and many more – I discovered that the arts centre did not work directly with any of these groups, but rather acted as administrators who rented out the space for these groups to use. They also did not have a dedicated outreach officer who might support or foster community relationships. This meant that the institution itself held few relationships with the ‘broader community context’. I therefore had no starting point, no contacts for groups, nor access to a community with whom I might participate, neither did I feel six weeks was an adequate time to develop productive new relationships. When I mentioned this to the staff at Rua Red, they suggested I contact the South Dublin County Council Arts Office, as they might be able to answer the questions I had about communities, community engagement, groups, or even projects that might involve the public. The Arts Office, however, were similarly unhelpful.

This outsourcing of community relations revealed the expectation Rua Red had of my project which was that I, as the participatory artist, would do the all participating and the institution itself would not be changing any of its approaches, but rather hope to benefit from having a broader community context take advantage of their building. In other words, for Rua Red, it seemed that ‘participation’ concerned numbers of audiences, rather than egalitarian relationships with people. This was in sharp contrast to the Shop of Possibilities at the South London Gallery’s (SLG), whose model of ‘working with people’ is a committed, entrenched and durational engagement that not only has staff dedicated to maintaining long-term relationships with the local community and housing estates that surrounds the institution, but also has a history of providing mentorship schemes, training programmes, as well as art clubs, movie nights, talks and other community events, supported and curated by the SLG and run in partnership with various groups on the housing estate, including the local Tenants and Residents’ Association.

For SLG, the inception of the long-term relationship with the gallery and the community has a rather telling ‘policy analogue’. The back wall of the SLG complex divided the institution from the housing estate directly behind them and in order to access the gallery, any community members would have had to go around the entire housing estate to the main road and to access the entrance. In 2011, SLG knocked down their back wall in order to provide easier, more direct access for those on the housing

⁵⁸ Email to Karen Phillips, Executive Director of Rua Red to author, November 17th, 2012. April 26th, 2013.

estate, thus proving their commitment to working with the community. It literally adjusted its own structure in order to accommodate and welcome the community, and continues to develop programmes and long-term relationships with them today.⁵⁹ The desired outcome of SLG's participatory projects with the community seems based on sustaining egalitarian relationship, as shown by its willingness to physically adjust itself. In contrast, Rua Red does one project a year that focuses on a 'broader community context' and did not have dedicated staff nor had cultured relationships to sustain or value that community context. Even the use of nomenclature of a 'broader community context' itself was telling in that it did not incorporate specific groups or recognise the diversity of publics, but rather referenced an amorphous, unspecified context.

There are obviously financial concerns in operating such a large-scale community programme as SLG's and Rua Red's programme is not core funded but on a project-by-project basis and so the two cannot be compared directly. However, considering the differences in desired outcomes assists in thinking about the *intentionality* of these two art institutions, and, in Rua Red's case, illustrates a mismatch between wanting 'participation projects' but not having sufficient means by which to achieve it practically or ethically. Much like the GMRC project, the focus therefore shifted attention to explore this mismatch, and the institution itself.

In the first work to do this – *The Artist Is Weeding* (RR5 – see page 174 for more information about this work) – I drew a comparison between the policy artefact of the main entrance of the building and Hewitt's notion of artists being instrumentalised by council-funded art projects to be "service providers"⁶⁰ for the state. The main entrance was a hollow wind-trap that gathered up all floating debris and garbage, with one large, imposing blank wall and a wide-open, unkempt, weed-covered area and anyone wishing to enter the gallery had to cross this uncomfortably blank space. The weeds, in particular, made it seem as if no one had ever crossed this space. This was, I suggested, metaphorical of the lack of commitment to inviting people into the building, and as I had been tasked to change this lack of audience, I took on the role of council-worker to clean the area of garbage and weeds, thereby literally becoming the council-employee Rua Red seemed to require. It was a direct challenge to the institution as to how I was being instrumentalised. It hoped to draw attention to both the impossibility of my task assigned to me, but also provide new suggestions of how the institution itself might adapt their own structures to practically invite 'new audiences' as well as the 'broader community context'.



Fig 6.16 *The Artist is Weeding*, Photographic documentation, August 2014.

As with the GMRC *Common Rooms/Commonsroom* and the Glasgow Life: Testament Choir works, however, I realised there was insufficient context to develop a productive conflictual dialogue on the issues raised in the work: neither the Director nor the staff of

⁵⁹ See F. Williams (2011) 'Facing Both Ways: an introduction' *The Cat Came As A Tomato*, London. South London Gallery Publication.

⁶⁰ A. Hewitt. (2011) 'Privatising the Public: Three rhetoric of art's public good in 'Third Way' cultural policy' in *Art & the Public Sphere*, 1:1, pp. 19 - 36.

Rua Red engaged with the work, nor were they interested in my conflictual critique, and thought of the work as a quirky methodology of mine to engage the community. There was, I realised, no shared sense of agonism or 'conflictual consensus'. As Mouffe suggests:

Artistic practices play a role in the maintenance, reconstruction and formation of a given symbolic order of a hegemony *or* in its challenge... Enemies have no common symbolic terrain. You want to destroy your enemies. In a *conflictual consensus* there is also no common symbolic terrain, but common, and different interpretations of a shared political symbolism *that recognises the legitimacy of the demands of the other*.⁶¹

In other words, in *The Artist Is Weeding*, the institution had not seen the work as a challenge because we had no shared ground of understanding about the role of the artist, or of the practical or ethical concerns of participatory projects. The institution had not recognised the legitimacy of any alternative hegemony to their own, and we had no shared context through which to enact productive conflict. This challenge to the institution was therefore unproductive in providing the potential for transformation, however it did challenge myself to change tactics that might incorporate a productive agonistic exchange.

6.4.2 Rua Red: Known Methodologies

This lack of shared context was also true for the 'broader community' as I had little opportunity to interact with the public, or access to mechanisms by which to develop sustained relationships. I therefore attempted a series of works that might forge relationships or build a context from which I could instigate a productive conflict (*Postcards* (RR6), *The State Vs. The Square* (RR4), *Things Will Change* (RR9), and *Alternative Cultural Walks* (RR7 – see page 175 for more information about this work).

The most successful of these was *Alternative Cultural Walks* in that it used the notion of the 'cultural walk' as a pre-existing methodology the citizens of Tallaght used regularly. These cultural walks were guided tours of cultural and historical interest and were popular in the town, especially those that were organised by Tallaght Historical Society. I therefore sent out invites, put up posters and invited people to whom I had spoken directly to a series of 'alternative cultural walks'. These each featured a walk that would challenge and critique notions of 'community' and 'cultural participation' by providing guided tours to spaces of 'alternative culture'. The aim was to put the traditional cultural hegemony in conflict with other more alternative expressions of 'culture'. For example, I led a tour to the small wall behind the bus-stop where empty beer-bottles were slowly accruing and proposed this was a similar historical artefact to the ruin of local monastery, in that they were both examples of human activity from which we could infer social values. This conflicted with the standard presentation of acceptable 'culture' and this led to wider discussion with participants of what was considered 'culture' and how and why. One participant suggested considering culture in such terms had proposed "a broader, more inclusive and democratic understanding of culture"⁶² rather than the 'official' one presented by groups such as Rua Red and the Tallaght Historical Society. In other words, this experience of conflict allowed participants an opportunity to consider and recognise alternative hegemonies of 'culture', and was accomplished by utilising a familiar (physical) methodology – i.e. the walk. That the walks went to 'dangerous' areas (behind bus-stops, over interstitial waste-grounds, and though abandoned buildings) assisted in presenting an alternative hegemony in that it provided a different way to experience the world. The participation

⁶¹ C. Mouffe. (2007) 'Agonistic Politics and Artistic Practices' (Lecture) Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow, 2nd March. (Emphasis added).

⁶² Unnamed participant in *Alternative Cultural Walk*, Tallaght, 30 August 2013.

in these walks physically presented both new ways to move, but also new ways to be in the world, challenging a standard manner of both how to 'experience' culture, but also how to 'enact' it.

Recognising that the *Alternative Culture Walks* was successful because it had relied on a 'known' methodology, I applied this to the institution and looked for shared understandings from which I could instigate a productive challenge. This came in the form the final work that took place at a large-scale public event arranged by the council. For this event, I intended the focus of the conflict to be Rua Red itself. It is useful at this juncture to remember that conflict is here defined as "the iterations of power that occur when a self/group collides with an 'other' which challenge the certainty of our hegemonies and/or our place within the world."⁶³ As such, I was seeking to challenge the certainty of Rua Red's understanding of participation by placing it in conflict with another hegemonic understanding.



Fig 6.17 *Alternative Cultural Works*, Photographic documentation, August 2014.



Fig 6.18 *Tallaght, As If It Was A House*, Photographic documentation, September 2015.

To do this, I took a two-tiered approach. The first approach was a reconfiguration of a project I had done in 2008 in Pakistan. In that project, I had been invited to develop a public artwork for a South-Asian, Muslim public in Lahore and I wished to question the logic of why I – as a white, European Christian male – had been asked to represent 'the public'. I therefore invited locals to construct their own conceptualisation of the 'public artwork.' Similarly, in Tallaght, I was at a loss as to how I could develop a public, participatory project for a community that was neither mine nor the community of the institution who had invited me. I therefore invited the public to construct Tallaght in their own image (*Tallaght, As If It Was A House* (RR13 – see page 177 for more information about this work). In this sense, the public had control of how they were representing their town, rather than myself, as the outsider, or the unengaged institution.

Additionally, the physical aspect of constructing this large, rickety structure also became metaphorical of social cohesion – literally working together on a shared expression. The physical labour involved – as opposed to cerebral or visual – engaged a broader section of the community in this metaphorical construction and I intentionally chose materials that were not traditionally 'artistic' to act in counter to the aesthetic hegemony of Rua Red. As artist Thomas Hirschhorn suggests:

To make art Politically means to *choose materials that do not intimidate*, a format that does not dominate, a device that does not seduce... It is to work with the fullest energy against the principle of quality.⁶⁴

⁶³ See, Chapter 4, Section 4.3 *Natural Conflict* (p. 62)

⁶⁴ T. Hirschhorn, (2000) in O. Enwezor (2000) *Thomas Hirschhorn: Jumbo Spoons and Big Cake*. Chicago. The Art Institute of Chicago. p. 29. (Emphasis added), in C. Bishop. (2004) 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics' *October*, Vol. 110. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. p. 75.

The question of 'quality' of participatory projects was the focus of the second part of this challenge of Rua Red's hegemony (*What, Public Art In Tallaght?* (RR14 – see page 177 for more information about this work)). In this work, the structure of *Tallaght (as if it were a house)* was the site of a curated discussion between individuals involved in public art provision within the town. This included the director of Rua Red, the director of a public art institution housed within the building (The Tallaght Community Arts project), a Youth Arts worker from the Council and myself. The intention of the discussion was to collapse the image of how the public saw Tallaght with how these public art figures envisaged Tallaght, and place these two hegemonies in conflict. In doing so, it hoped to reverse the normal flow of power so that instead of those that commissioned public art dictating the forms of public works, the public framed the experience for the commissioners. Crucially the event happened in public, during the public event, so that those involved in the practice of 'public art' might have to respond to the public in a 'real time' rather than an abstracted, removed, council or gallery setting. Indeed, we were interrupted several times by citizens of Tallaght asking what we were doing, and why it was important. These unplanned, challenging interruptions were helpful in exploring how and why institutions were involved with public art.

This unpredictability of engagement, the physical precariousness of the house, as well as the unprotected nature of the cardboard house was essential to the context I wanted to evoke. Additionally, rather than just a discussion, I demanded the discussion end with a series of recommendations to adopt regarding Public Art in Tallaght. These recommendations were to be posted publicly and this put Rua Red in an uncomfortable position about their commitment to public, participatory projects. This challenged not only Rua Red but the other Public Art organisations to rethink their relationship with audiences and through that, the potential to rethink their *intentions* towards the public of Tallaght. I did not want to dictate what that rethinking might entail, but was confident that via these conflicts the potential for a productive reassessment of how ethical participatory practices might become possible at Rua Red emerged.

6.4.3 Rua Red: Conclusion and Tangential Learning

Unlike the ethical problematics that might arise by putting the GL choir in a visible 'conflictual' position that might expose them to censure, I reasoned that as the institution had initiated a participatory project, they had therefore opened the door to be critiqued on what that 'participation' implicated. The act of invitation tacitly approved of an inquiry of what it meant to 'participate' and was ethically uncomplicated about challenging the organisation on what that meant. It was hoped that such a conflict might challenge how one could productively and ethically, enact conflictual participatory project.

The lack of pre-existing groups and relationships meant that focus of the participatory engagement had to be aimed at the institution itself, rather than 'broader community context'. While there were a few conflictual and ethical engagements with the public (*Alternative Cultural Walks*) that acted to challenge a dominant hegemony of culture and challenge how participation *should* occur, the majority of the project employed conflict to draw attention to the flawed ethical and practical structures as well as intentions of the project and of Rua Red in general. In this sense, it changed the focus from 'audiences' and 'numbers' as the institution had wished, to be more about the potential for transformation of the institution to enact ethical participation, as well as encouraging a more democratic sphere. This was also present in the physical configuration of events such as *What, Public Art in Tallaght*, which challenged the institution to consider their intentions towards the public and why they were employing participatory practices.

While not directly related to my research questions, there is a final important understanding that was gained from this project regarding participation and aesthetics.

As my work rests within the phenomenologically physical realm, I had – and still do – considered documentary evidence as secondary to the primary, corporeal event. In the past, I had felt that a few digital stills and a short video sufficed to give a gist of a project’s meaning, as its ‘complete’ meaning could not be known unless directly experienced. To explore this I considered Bishop’s notion that participatory projects need to consider the “meaning of what it produces, rather than attending solely to process. This result – the mediating object, concept, image or story – is the necessary link between the artist and a secondary audience.”⁶⁵ I therefore mirrored the outsourcing of community relations and invited a local filmmaker to document one of my events (*Bulldog* (RR15)). The intention was to remove myself from the documentary process and investigate if that gist was still sufficient to communicate the concepts of the work. The resulting documentation, however, was of incredibly poor quality – shaky video, out of focus, inaudible sound and insufficient narrative structure – that I recognised the secondary artwork of documentation, while not as vital as the primary experience, does hold the key to how ephemeral artworks are translated, or not.

From this shift in thinking, I began to focus more attention on the ‘visual’ elements of my work in future projects. The development of appropriate documentary evidence that emerged from these projects is a parallel learning strand to my research questions in that a self-sustaining, aesthetic document can still retain political potency as well as translate meaning. Bishop draws on Rancière to discuss this ‘mediating object’ (documentation) that exists as a spectacle that can be viewed by a third party: “This spectacle is a third term, to which the other two can refer, but which prevents any kind of “equal” or “undistorted” transmission. It is a mediation between them, and that mediation of a third term is crucial in the process of intellectual emancipation.”⁶⁶ In other words, the document has a political power because it can act as a mediator and alternative between different hegemonies. This does not act in contrast to my physical work, only that any visual remainder (i.e. documentation) requires deeper consideration.

6.5 Atelier Public#2: Make Destruction

The following project was similar to the GMRC and Glasgow Life Choir projects above in that it was a similarly short-term engagement, but in contrasts these works – and Rúa Red above – as the institution was prepared for (and supportive of) a conflictual participatory approach. Additionally, it was a project in which a successful, agonistic relationship with the institution had been developed and which supported a productive use of conflict throughout the process – again, in contrast to Rúa Red.

In November 2011, Katie Bruce – Curator/Producer at GoMA – designed an exhibition with artist Rachel Mimiec called *Atelier Public* as a way to explore the public participation within the contexts of gallery and the “aesthetics of play.”⁶⁷ The exhibition was described as one “that takes the form of a working artist studio – one that everyone is invited to come into, to make artworks that will become part of the installation.”⁶⁸ The gallery show began as an empty room, populated only with art materials and an invitation to anyone entering to make and display their own creations in an expanding exhibition. As part of the 2014 Glasgow International (G.I.) Biennial of Contemporary Art in April 2014, Bruce re-presented the project as *Atelier Public#2* and took as its starting point some of the critical insights of its previous inception. These included concerns about how the selected materials guided the form and content of the

⁶⁵ C. Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London, Verso. p. 9.

⁶⁶ J. Rancière, (2007) ‘The Emancipated Spectator’, *Artforum*, March 2007, p. 278. in C. Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London, Verso. p. 27.

⁶⁷ Katie Bruce, Curator/Producer at Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow, in discussion with the author, April 11th, 2014.

⁶⁸ *Atelier Public#2* press release, November 10th, 2011. Gallery of Modern Art (Glasgow).

created artworks (Bruce referred to as the “tyranny of the materials”⁶⁹), how truly ‘public’ a gallery exhibit could be, and Bruce’s role as ‘curator’ for an exhibit that began with no artworks. As a way to explore some of these concerns, Bruce asked “particular artists, thinkers and makers who have a special interest in play, creativity and the imagination to engage with the space throughout the duration of the exhibition.”⁷⁰ I was included in this group.

As mentioned above, my relationship with Glasgow Life (GL) began with my *Legacy...* work which had developed out of residency with the Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA), with which Bruce had been involved. Additionally, my residencies at 220 High Street and GMRC acted as a reminder of my current research interests and that any contribution I would make to the *Atelier Public#2* project might evoke ‘conflict.’ Her invitation to take part was certainly not prescriptive, and her email invitation to myself and the other ‘artists, thinkers and makers’ reveals her open-ended approach:

I am beginning to take that leap into the unknown and invite people into the process that is ATELIER PUBLIC#2 and I wondered if you would be interested? It would be good to catch up with you about it as you may have no time or some time (therefore wanting to take part in research discussions) or you might have all the time in the world (haha!) and want to dive into the exhibition itself.⁷¹

As a group of invited artists, thinkers and makers, we met several times before the exhibit to discuss the project and to develop our interventions in relation to each other. Examples of the different interventions included inserting different types of materials and media into the exhibition, choreographed and improvised performances, events and text responses – both formal, critical texts about the exhibition, as well as texts to be included in the exhibition space itself.

For my contribution, I proposed an event that explored the institutional intent of a public and participatory art project that was based within an institutional (specifically Local Authority) setting. I aimed to reveal and critique these approaches via inviting people to destroy the exhibition. The impetus for this examination stemmed from my understanding of the Local Authority as a producer of the majority of participatory projects,⁷² (taking the forms of participatory projects with schools, education projects, gallery outreach etc.) and from this monopoly, I suggested that a ‘state aesthetic’ of public and participatory art emerges.

6.5.1 *Atelier Public#2: A ‘state aesthetic’ of participation*

This ‘state aesthetic’ takes the form of convivial or ‘nice’ projects that reflect the aesthetics of the Community Art Movement with its emphasis on *participation* over the aesthetics: where “the ‘social’ [was] understood as conviviality.”⁷³ This is major concern for Bishop who rails against the notion that “open-ended conviviality [is] sufficient evidence of social engagement.”⁷⁴ Instead, she values antagonism over the convivial in order to retain an ethical and political dimension. David Beech argues that this approach limits the possibilities of the practice: “But why would antagonism have to

⁶⁹ Katie Bruce, Curator/Producer at Gallery of Modern Art in discussion with the author. May 2014.

⁷⁰ ‘About Atelier Public#2’ (n.d.) Atelier Public Website <http://atelierpublic.wordpress.com/blog/>. (Available online – Accessed 12 April 2014)

⁷¹ Katie Bruce, Curator/Producer at Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow, in email to author, 29 October 2013.

⁷² E. Belfiore. (2002) ‘Art as a means of alleviating social exclusion: Does it really work? A critique of instrumental cultural policies and social impact studies in the UK’ *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 8:1. pp. 91 – 106. p. 96.

⁷³ C. Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London, Verso. p. 211.

⁷⁴ C. Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London, Verso. p. 245.

appear *in* the work? Does Bishop not neglect the variety of possible ways in which hegemony can be challenged and the variety of ways in which art can contribute to that process?”⁷⁵ Indeed, hegemonies can be challenged in a multiplicity of ways, but my concern in Atelier Public#2 was that the aesthetic framing of an institutionally-based participatory experience as ‘nice’ and convivial was problematic as it obscured the hegemonic functioning of the institution’s goal to “construct civic identities”⁷⁶ amenable to a state.⁷⁷ The framing of participatory art projects as ‘nice’ can also be seen to emerge from state-funded, social inclusion policies, in which ‘inclusion’ is the primary goal. This elides with the notion that publicly-funded, policy-enacting agencies – i.e. Local Authority museums/galleries such as GoMA – cannot be seen to support projects that are overtly exclusionary, selfish or contentious, as they are *public* bodies and must represent the entirety of the public. They cannot, in their public position, but defer to the entirety of the social. Thus, the ‘state aesthetic’ is political in its intention to present a specific order and also political in that it defers to a tyranny of the social that Rancière expands upon in *The Ethical Turn*.⁷⁸



Fig 6.19 Anonymous artwork as part of AtelierPublic#2, Photographic documentation, April 2014.

Fig 6.20 Anonymous artwork as part of AtelierPublic#2, Photographic documentation, April 2014.

Fig 6.21 Anonymous artwork as part of AtelierPublic#2, Photographic documentation, April 2014.

This aesthetic was apparent in the selection of materials as bright, genial and cheerful colours (see examples of work produced during the project: Fig 6.19, 6.20 and 6.21), but it also emerged from wording of the explanatory text, which invited people to “a space for looking, thinking, exploring and making.”⁷⁹ Additionally, the language of the press release and invitation suggested a particular creative expressive methodology was sanctioned within the gallery:

Members of the public [are] invited to *create artworks using materials available in the gallery*... In the spirit of ATELIER PUBLIC, I would like to invite *you to use the materials to make new work*, which will be installed in this gallery for other visitors to see.⁸⁰

The emphasis on ‘creation’ and ‘making’ was framed in a productive sense and limited participants expressive options to only those sanctioned by the gallery. This was most apparent in the way that the staff of GoMA would edit-out ‘offensive’ artworks, including removing artworks that were considered sectarian or offensive to other social groups.

⁷⁵ D. Beech (2010) ‘Don’t Look Now! Art After The Viewer and Beyond Participation’ in J. Walwin (ed.) *Searching For Arts New Publics*. Bristol. Intellect. p. 23. (Emphasis original).

⁷⁶ J. Vickery. (2007) *The Emergence of Culture-led Regeneration: A policy concept and its discontents*. Centre for Cultural Policy Studies, Coventry: University of Warwick.

⁷⁷ See Chapter 3, (3.3 Implicitly and Explicitly Billy Elliot (The Dance of Art and Governance)) for a broader critique, including Ruth Levitas, Jonathan Vickery, Sophie Hope, Andy Hewitt, etc.

⁷⁸ J Rancière. (2006) ‘The Ethical Turn of Aesthetics and Politics’ *Critical Horizons* 7:1 in *Malaise dans l’Esthétique*. Paris: Galilee. 2004. pp. 143 – 173.

⁷⁹ ‘About Atelier Public#2’. (n.d.) Atelier Public Website <http://atelierpublic.wordpress.com/blog/>. (Available online – Accessed 12 April 2014)

⁸⁰ ‘Press Release’ (n.d.) (n.d.) Atelier Public Website <http://atelierpublic.wordpress.com/blog/>. (Available online – Accessed 12 April 2014) (Emphasis added).

Most tellingly, Bruce and staff had to cover up graffiti tags written on the gallery wall that contained swearing or abusive/insulting language (see Fig 6.22 and 6.23, below).

Bruce explained that much of this editing occurred because the gallery is a public space that welcomed a plethora of people and options, including children and schools groups and so had to consider the “appropriateness”⁸¹ of the works displayed. The materials, language and editing of the exhibition then presented a ‘state aesthetic’ that ensures participatory, public projects do not offend. In other words: a participatory project funded by the state (or, at least this Local Authority) require conceptual and aesthetic boundaries due to its position as a public body, and this delineates the edges of ‘acceptable’ expression. State funded participatory works can only therefore exist in a singular manner: more often-than-not in a ‘child-friendly’, convivial format. In this way, it limits the democratic sphere as it denies difference, alterity and alternative hegemonies.



Fig 6.22 Anonymous artwork as part of AtelierPublic#2 (covered graffiti tag), Photographic documentation, April 2014.

Fig 6.23 Anonymous artwork as part of AtelierPublic#2 (uncovered graffiti tag), Photographic documentation, April 2014.

To explore this ‘state aesthetic’ and its intentions, I referred back to Hewitt’s critique of Third Way policies and his suggestion that artists employed under such remits become “service providers”⁸² for these state mandates.⁸³ I therefore aimed to challenge this ‘state aesthetic’ and so designed a contribution to Atelier Public#2 that was based around the notion of ‘destruction’ (*Make Destruction* (AP3 – see page 183 for more information about this project)). This event consisted of a text invitation to ‘the public’⁸⁴ (marketed via Glasgow Life channels, social media as well as a press release) to come to the gallery on April 11th, 2015 and destroy any or all of artworks in the exhibition. In the invitation, I drew attention to the ontological similarity between the concepts of ‘creation’ and ‘destruction’ by explaining that one cannot ‘create’ anything without ‘destroying’ something else, and to ‘destroy’ something ‘creates’ another thing: to draw depletes ink; to break a window creates new shapes of glass; to build a sandcastle is to create holes in the beach. Both creation and destruction are productive acts, and the only difference is a value system that gives meaning to the outcome of the difference actions. The destruction event would therefore draw attention to the value systems of the Atelier Public#2 project and highlight those actions that praised one way of expression but disavowed others. Importantly, the event was designed to follow the Atelier Public#2 remits in that the participating public were still to “create artworks using materials available in the gallery,” only that the artwork would be an ephemeral, expressive act of destruction, rather than a convivial expressive act of creation.

⁸¹ Katie Bruce, Curator/Producer at Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow, in discussion with the author, April 11th 2014.

⁸² A. Hewitt. (2011) ‘Privatising the Public: Three rhetoric of art’s public good in ‘Third Way’ cultural policy’ in *Art & the Public Sphere*, 1:1. pp. 19 – 36.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ This is in inverted commas as I recognise that this is a contested word, and ‘the public’ is rarely a unified, homogenic collection but rather a pluralistic and diverse collection of multiple ‘publics’.

Katie Bruce agreed my proposed event and we collaboratively decided on three caveats that were established to ensure that we stayed true to the intentions and invitation of the exhibition:

- 1) During the destruction event, the public could also come to defend artworks of their own, or someone else's. (This had the two-fold effect of allowing people to defend and value works that had already been made – thus developing a relationship with the artworks, and therefore the gallery – but also introduced a confrontational aspect to the event.)
- 2) No materials could leave the room so that no external 'aesthetic of play' was introduced or existing materials were removed.
- 3) The fabric of the building could not be damaged. This was decided purely for financial and practical reasons.

On April 11th, approximately 90 people entered the gallery over the space of 1.5 hours, variously engaging in destructive acts or observing the actions of ripping cardboard, tearing down string contraptions, or peeling off tape and vinyl constructions. The destructive acts stood in contrast to the 'traditional' acts of making and allowed a framework for multiple perspectives to emerge, challenging the dominant hegemony and drawing attention to the intention of the exhibition itself, providing a context where those invited could contribute to collective, public expression on their own terms, rather than mediated by a dominant force.

A journalist in attendance, Adam Benmakhlof, wrote later:

There is a perverse but real pleasure in crumpling the cut constructions paper letters of a tourists' boasting 'from San Francisco' and children 'aged 6.'... It is nearing the end of the evening when Schrag and I become embroiled in a physical fight over a large white cardboard box that has been decorated with some unidentifiable blue shapes. But he's already won, having shoved and elbowed out the indolence of passive, slow gallery strolling. For ninety minutes, art appreciation is somehow made a physically demanding (and seriously fun) sport.⁸⁵

Benmakhlof's reference to sport draws on the physicality behind the destructive acts, and indeed there was a visceral, corporeal urgency to the acts. As with the 'materials that do not intimidate' approach of Hirschhorn, the physical emphasis of acts to provide an implicit meaning and access to concepts because we are all corporeal. Indeed, the most 'effective' destructive acts were entirely body-based, with participants throwing their entire weight into the activities, diving into artworks, and wrestling cardboard sculptures down to the ground. This act of 'making' stood in sharp contrast to the delicate, considered works that were being destroyed.



Fig 6.24 *AtelierPublic#2 - Make Destruction*, Photographic documentation, April 2014.

Fig 6.25 *AtelierPublic#2 - Make Destruction*, Photographic documentation, April 2014.

Fig 6.26 *AtelierPublic#2 - Make Destruction*, Photographic documentation, April 2014.

⁸⁵ A. Benmakhlof. 'Destroying Art @GoMA'. *The Skinny Magazine*. Edinburgh. 28th April 2014.

This physicality assisted in highlighting the alternative 'ways of creating' that stood in sharp contrast to the original intentions of the Atelier Public. It should be noted that throughout the three-month exhibition, there was no mechanism to stop a visitor entering the space and destroying or altering a work that someone else had made, and so to a large extent, the *Make Destruction* event merely gave 'permission' to explore a different creative process. The necessity for this permission, however, highlights the expected formulations of participatory projects, which align with the nice, 'state aesthetic' and limit the production of participatory projects to specific forms. Placing this in conflict with an alternative hegemony – a destructive one – allowed the development of a more democratic sphere where alternative perspectives could emerge and offer the potential for transformation to the participants.

This democratic sphere was highlighted in two other ways. Firstly, the 'destructive' process revealed the previous obscured 'offensive' graffiti, thus presenting a more accurate reflection of the broad approaches to expression, as well as alternative perspectives to the 'convivial' one being framed. Secondly, and more unexpectedly, it was highlighted by a raucous and lively group of 'defenders', acting in opposition to my intention. The date, information and concept of this destruction event had been listed in the gallery since the exhibition had opened, including the invitation for people to come to defend artworks. After reading about the event in the Herald newspaper, these four members of the public appeared an hour before the doors opened with roll of bubble-wrap, intent on "protecting everything they could."⁸⁶ They had also taken it upon themselves to begin a Social Media campaign calling for friends to attend the event to protect all artworks they could, reasoning that "all art was worth protecting."⁸⁷ Upon the doors opening, they established a base at the rear of the gallery and sent out protective sorties past their barricades to collect and bringing back artworks to protect behind their defences: peeling intricate vinyl off walls and placing it in plastic folders for safekeeping; wrapping up delicate paper sculptures; or gently handling cardboard structures. Acting like a well-organised, military operation, I noticed them yelling to each other to "get the ninja turtles"⁸⁸ or "I'll get the moose-head, you stay and guard the base."⁸⁹ Alongside members of the public who had specifically returned to defend their own artworks, these Defender's *modus operandi* seemed to be to protect everything, rather than specific works.

This unexpected contribution challenged my own hegemony of what I felt should occur during the event and, in this sense, the act of introducing conflict (i.e. destruction) into this 'state aesthetic' allowed the rise of a counter-force and the establishing a democratic sphere. As Bishop paraphrases Laclau and Mouffe: "a democratic society is one in which relations of conflict are sustained, not erased."⁹⁰ In other words, under the correct conditions of institutionally supported conflictual engagement, this manifestation of a participatory project could not only offer the potential for transformation, but become a truly political artwork in that it revealed in what ways democracy was being limited and framed. These correct conditions only arose from a functional and productive agonistic relationship with GoMA and its staff.

6.5.2 Atelier Public#2: A Short Note On Successful Short Term Engagement

Before I address the productive agonistic relationship, a key point of comparison here is that the event was a one-day participatory event, similar to the short-term engagements at GMRC and Glasgow Life Choir. In contrast to these 'failures' however,

⁸⁶ Comment by participant in Atelier Public#2 Make Destruction event. Emphasis added.

⁸⁷ Comment by participant in Atelier Public#2 Make Destruction event. Emphasis added.

⁸⁸ Comment by participant in Atelier Public#2 Make Destruction event. Emphasis added.

⁸⁹ Comment by participant in Atelier Public#2 Make Destruction event. Emphasis added.

⁹⁰ C. Bishop. (2004) 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics'. *October*, Volume 110. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. in reference to E. Laclau and C. Mouffe (1985) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London, Verso.

this was a well-attended and well-engaged event. This is because 'structures of engagement' existed in GoMA. Unlike GMRC and Glasgow Life Choir, mechanisms to communicate to participants, artists and staff about a project's concept existed. This was partly because there had already been a manifestation of the Atelier Public project and so staff and participants were aware of what such a project entailed. Primarily, however, it was due to the communication and negotiation undertaken by Bruce before the project began its public and/or participatory component, ensuring clarity of intent and concept for both artists and the institution.

Similarly, unlike Rua Red, the institution had a successful history of long-term relationships with both schools groups as well as wider community networks. Before the exhibition or my contribution to it had even begun, Bruce had contacted local groups to invite them to participate. I was therefore able to 'piggy-back' upon these pre-existing relationships at the same time as foster new relationships, as well as challenge the dynamics of those pre-existing relationships. In other words, one of the major factors of this participatory projects success lay in the institution supporting and valuing pre-existing, long-term engagement with members of the public.

6.5.3 Atelier Public#2: Agonistic Relationships

The other major factor of its success was a successful agonistic relationship with the institution. As mentioned before, I had a long relationship with GoMA and Katie Bruce, and the institution was therefore aware of my practice and my interest in challenging institutional framing of participation. Rather than shying away from such critique, they were interested in what such an agonistic relationship could offer, as Bruce herself is on record saying.⁹¹ This relates back to the GRMC project, above, in which I came to understand the difference between the institution as a *system* and the institution as a *collection of people*. Bruce was aware that the system of the institution is what dictates what is 'appropriate', and what guides this 'state aesthetic', and as a single individual within that wider system, she has few opportunities to challenge or change that system without censure. In her role, however, she *can* invite an external artist into that realm to ask those questions in collaboration with the institution.

This does not suggest she was acting as an insurgent, but rather she recognises the limits of her position and attempts to challenge those institutional structures from within. I give much credence and respect to this position, and Bruce specifically, because our relationship reminds me that the professional world of participatory practices is a nuanced one: not a black-and-white camp of 'good' and 'bad' forces, but rather a Foucauldian, dynamic and shifting thing in which power is constantly renegotiated. What is at stake is *what works* for ethical participation for each context. As such, Bruce's invitation to participate in Atelier Public#2 allowed me, via the *Make Destruction* event, to challenge the institution to push their framework in order to explore alternative and/or less hermetic propositions of participatory practices; to see to what extent they can offer a non 'state aesthetic'.

As I have previously discussed, it is not my intention to dictate those alternatives or propose less hermetic propositions, but rather leave the 'potential for transformation' in the heart of the receiver. The challenge to the 'state aesthetic' succeeded in unsettling the institutional intent as well as provided the potential for transformation, both to the participants, and the institution.

6.5.4 Atelier Public#2: Institutional Resurgence (Or, Hospitality in Action)

The power of the institution, however, cannot be over-estimated and it made itself manifest at the end of the *Make Destruction* event. As the event came to a close, I had

⁹¹ See page 47 – 49, above.

asked all participants to stop destroying works and vacate the premises in order for the gallery to be closed for the night. For me, the 'art' had happened – participants had entered the space and created, as per the invitation, and – as no materials had entered or departed – only the aesthetics of the exhibition had changed. Torn cardboard, half-ripped vinyl, scrunched paper sculptures, footprints on barely survived paper works: the space was messy and chaotic, with piles of random, destroyed works lay all over the floor. It had taken on an anarchic and chaotic aesthetic, rather the convivial 'state aesthetic', nice form it had been in originally. As we were clearing the room of participants, Bruce brought two brooms into the space and intimated that she would need to clean the space before anyone could enter again.

She explained that it no longer 'looked' like a participatory project where 'everyone is invited to come into, to make artworks that will become part of the installation': it 'looked' like a chaotic mess and as such, she felt the invitation (and thus the exhibition) would no longer function. However, her main concern lay in institutional pressures: she could not allow the public to enter a space with uneven floors and trip- and slip-hazards. Additionally, the building's janitorial staff would not be able to do their duties in the gallery, thereby possibly making it unsafe for public entrance. She therefore began to clean the space to return it to a 'functional' level.

I was personally torn as to whether or not I should help her clean up the space or not. On one hand, the work was complete and as it stood, the exhibition challenged the 'state aesthetic' as I had intended. On the other hand, however, I had been responsible for the destruction and was aware that Bruce would be personally responsible for hours of labour (above and beyond her already heavy workload) to return the gallery back to its institutionally acceptable form before anyone could be allowed into the space. I eventually decided join her in a re-aestheticisation of the space, sweeping the floors, recycling broken works, even making a sculptural object of all the destroyed vinyl and helping her cover up offensive graffiti.

While this might be read as a 'failure' of the potential for transformation, I instead read it as part of the shared responsibility of an agonistic relationship. The conflict to institution was successful; it allowed a challenge to the institutional intent and the notion of 'state aesthetic', as well as provided a truly democratic sphere via such a participatory project. To help Bruce clean up was, I felt, part of the reciprocal relationship that would assist in the exhibition's functioning in order for the challenges I had offered the participants and the institution to *continue* to emerge, on their own terms. Had I demanded that the exhibition stay in the chaotic form, I would have denied the institution's functioning, but more importantly, I would have been enforcing my own specific my framing of 'art' onto the institution

In this sense, this action refers back to Derrida's paradox of hospitality. He has pointed out the "close epistemological proximity between hospitality and hostility, both of which are derived from the word foreigner (*hostis*)."⁹² He combined these terms to present the notion of *hostipitality*, and Mouffe invokes this term, suggesting that "agonistic pluralist approach should envisage the pluri-verse in terms of 'hostipitality', as the space where an agonistic encounter takes place between a diversity of poles which engage with each other without any one of them having the pretence of being the superior one."⁹³ In this sense, an egalitarian relationship between myself and the institution has been the most fruitful when enacting this paradox of being a hospitable foreigner: the outsider who helps the insiders via his outsidersness, difference and conflict.

6.5.5 Atelier Public#2: Conclusion

⁹² S. Jestrovic. (2008) 'Performing Like An Asylum Seeker: Paradoxes of hyper-authenticity in Schlingensiefel's Please Love Austria'. C. Bishop & M Sladen. (eds) (2008) *Double Agent, Exhibition Catalogue*, 14 February 2008 – 6 April 2008, Institute of Contemporary Art, London, UK.

⁹³ C. Mouffe, (2013) *Agonistics: Thinking The World Politically*. London. Verso. p. 41.

In this project, with the relevant structures of engagement, communication and mechanisms of participation in place, and with a successful agonistic relationship, I was able to induce a conflict that challenged the state aesthetic of the institution and presented new hegemonies to develop regarding what it means to 'make art'. Using physicality to engage participants gave tacit clues and access to these new hegemonies in ways that traditional, reflective experience of a gallery could not. Conflict additionally became an effective mechanism through which to reveal the institutional intention and support institutional staff to challenge those intentions, as well as to provide a truly democratic sphere. As Rosalyn Deutsche clarifies: "Conflict, division, and instability, then, do not ruin the democratic public sphere; they are conditions of its existence."⁹⁴ Most importantly, the egalitarian relationship between myself and the institution did not collapse utopian notions of the 'best' way to make participatory projects, but allowed space for an agonistic and relational dialogue between two differing perspectives. Out of all the research of this PhD, I felt this project was most effective in showing how conflict might be productive to institutionally supported participatory projects.

6.6 Aberdeen Art Gallery: We All Cast Shadows

In my penultimate project, I was commissioned by the Aberdeen Art Gallery (AAG) to develop their contribution to the GENERATION project. GENERATION was a large-scale celebration of the past 25 years of contemporary Scottish art and was positioned as the cultural arm to the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, 2014. The AAG project – entitled: Playtime/Placetime – looked to bring together art and sport in a context-let, community-based project. It aimed to use physicality as a methodology to explore site and identity.

Initially the project did not align with my research and had intended to decline the offer, but when I began to explore the context and the institutional intent of the project, I felt it could offer some deeper insight on the place of productive conflict within an institutionally situated participatory setting, specifically, how it might offer new relationships with 'the public'. Additionally, the application of sports-related works aligned with my research of 'physicality' as a methodology of engagement and critique within participatory settings.

Originally, the brief of the project read:

At the end of this year, the Aberdeen Art Gallery will be closed for refurbishment and Aberdeen's entire art collection will be moved to a purpose-built site in Northfield, in the north of the city. This project looks to make connections between places and people via events inspired by its art collection.⁹⁵

The idea was to 'trace' the movement of the collection across the city in six events that started at its current location at the centre of Aberdeen and ended at the site of the future Collection Centre in Northfield: a site that I discovered in my research was deeply contested. Northfield is a socio-economically deprived area with a stigma of poverty and violence in the North of city with few amenities. The Aberdeen Council had chosen Northfield as it offered cheap property and a large enough site to house their entire collection. The local community, in contrast, had wanted a shopping centre or more local amenities on the site and were unhappy that the council was spending a large amount of money on a specialist art storage building and not on the community

⁹⁴ R. Deutsche (1996) *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* Cambridge, Mass. MIT Press, 1996. p. 295 – 96 as quoted in C. Bishop, (2004) *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics. October*. Volume 110. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

⁹⁵ Placetime/Placetime Press Release. Aberdeen Art Gallery, Aberdeen. March 20th, 2014.

directly. One resident explained: “We want more local shops or a butchers, not an art building.”⁹⁶ Additionally, this new building was being phrased as beneficial to the area, although it was not apparent in what ways the community itself would directly gain from its construction: staff would not be drawn from a local pool but be pre-existing Art Gallery staff, and nor would the new Collection Centre be open to the public, but by appointment only. The community were therefore unhappy with the proposed construction and were hesitant to be involved in *any* project that celebrated it, such as the Playtime/Placetime project.

The first few events (*Human Easter Egg Rolling* (AAG1) and *Tennish* (AAG2)) proved this as no community members chose to get involved, and research in the area revealed the negative sentiments towards the project. Similar to the Rua Red experience above, it also became apparent that I was expected to do all the ‘participating’ and the institution would benefit from the audiences of public engagement. This was revealed in a lack of institutional presence at either of these events and in this way, the Playtime/Placetime project seemed to have been instrumentalised as a ‘marketing campaign’ for the new Collection Centre and the relationship with the community of Northfield seemed to be unequally premised. Unlike Rua Red, however, when I raised these issues to the institution, the Aberdeen Art Gallery staff were receptive to the challenge, and interested in what ways the project – and their relationship with the community – could be reconfigured. In other words, they were interested in developing an agonistic relationship. From this, I developed several works that offered the potential for transformation that challenged their instrumentalisation of public, participatory art.



Fig 6.27 Original Map of Events, as part of *Placetime/Placetime* project, Digitally manipulated Google Map, March 2014.
 Fig 6.28 *Human Easter Egg Rolling*, Photographic documentation, April 2014.

6.6.1 Aberdeen Art Gallery: Art Gallery Invasion Force

For financial reasons, I kept the structure of the project as a series of event-based works that were inspired from the Aberdeen Art Gallery collection, but instead of being focused purely on ‘the public’, I shifted the focus to the institution itself. The most salient of these events was *The Collection of Failure* (AAG5 – see page 186 for more information on this work) in which I invited all staff from the Collection to discuss the ‘failure’ of the future Collection Centre. Up to this point, the rhetoric around the Collection Centre had been continually phrased in terms of ‘success’ and, as with the *Make Destruction* event above, found that proposing the opposite rhetoric assisted in unravelling the actual intentions of its ‘success’.

This event took place after a successful negotiation with Aberdeen Gallery and Museums’ Manager Christine Rew to allow an ‘away day’ for all staff to attend a presentation and discussion at the Northfield Community Centre. It aimed to mirror the notions of ‘gallery outreach’ (under which department my project fell) in that ‘outreach’ normally features the gallery reaching out and pulling in members of the public. This work, instead, pushed out the ‘gallery’ and dragged it into the public sphere. Most of the staff had never been to Northfield before, and this in itself was a challenge to begin

⁹⁶ Resident of Northfield, Aberdeenshire at the *We All Cast Shadows* event, 30th June 2014.

to consider who the citizens of Northfield were and how the Collection Centre might – or might not – contribute to their lives. To begin the event, Jacquie Innes – Manager of the Northfield Community Centre and a formidable, straight-talking woman – had asked if she might present some “home truths about life in Northfield”⁹⁷ to the staff and speak about the community and its needs and requirements, very little of which related to notions of art or the new Collection Centre. This insight came as a shock to many staff members who argued that the Collection Centre could be beneficial as it would bring international visitors to the area wishing to see the incredibly diverse collection, featuring works by Rodin, a Monet as well as other highly respected museum works. Jacquie countered by asking in what way this might be useful for families with addiction issues and no money. I followed this somewhat confrontational discussion with a series of ‘artist renditions’ of the different ways the proposed Collection Centre might fail, or succeed, within Northfield.

After this, I invited the staff to walk to the site of the proposed building with various signs that used the language of war and identified them as the Collection Staff – i.e. ‘*The Collection Centre Reconnaissance Mission*’ or ‘*The Aberdeen Art Gallery Invasion Force*’. This had the effect of making the staff visible to the community, and in presenting the staff as invading outsiders, it also challenged the ameliorative notions that had been presented by rhetoric of ‘success’ and how that can be equated to notions of colonisation. After this walk, we returned to the Collection Centre to discuss how the construction of the centre might fail or succeed, and, most importantly on whose terms: the Art Gallery’s or the Community’s? The discussion finished with the group deciding on a series of ‘anonymous action points’ (*in*)*Action Points* (AAG6) that I would feed back to the upper management.

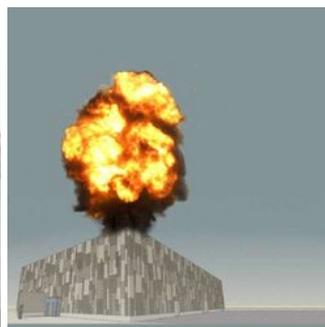


Fig 6.29 Artists Re-imagining Of The Proposal for AAG Collection Centre (Success/Failure) Digital Montage, May 2014.

Fig 6.30 Artists Re-imagining Of The Proposal for AAG Collection Centre (Failure/Success) Digital Montage, May 2014.

The aim of the whole event was to provide a geographical, inter-personal and conceptually-based conflict by relocating the staff to the actual site, by introducing them to the community and by re-considering the way the project had been conceptually positioned. Conflict was therefore productive in drawing attention to the specific language of ‘success’ and challenging the institution to consider in what ways it was pressing its hegemony onto the community without its consent. Additionally, by feeding back these (*in*)*Action Points* to managers, it ensured that the challenge was not coming from an antagonistic and unhelpfully critical perspective, but from the staff themselves, gained from this conflictual event. This began to entrench a positive agonistic relationship that assisted with the development of the final event discussed below.

6.6.2 Aberdeen Art Gallery: A Short Note On Collaborations

Before discussing the final event, it is important to mention the projects that were developed with the community. In this way, the project was a two-tiered engagement with community *and* the institution. These community events were mostly enacted by

⁹⁷ Jacquie Innes, manager of the Northfield Community Centre, Northfield, Aberdeen. June 2014.

the project's assistants. This was not, I should clarify, because such engagement was less important or because they required less attention from myself as the lead artist, but rather because the artist assistants were local and could therefore have a longer, more committed engagement with the local community. This was a concern for a 'residency' based relationship with the community that I was unable to enact due to unforeseen circumstances. Thus, the assistants enacted this residency-based approach. These engagements were mentored weekly by myself to ensure they were ethically and aesthetically premised. I will not discuss all of these artistic works at any length in this text, but do expand on them in Appendix I (see page 188 for more information about these works). These projects emerged from a mentorship scheme suggested by Grey's School of Art in Aberdeen. This scheme took the form of seminars and discussions about 'participatory' art and I invited this group to become 'artist assistants' and to develop their own work as part of the project. One of these works is useful to consider as an 'adjunct' to my research in that it also enacted a conflictual methodology. Alice Gamper developed a one-off event where the local boxing group 'boxed' a replica of a painting by William Roberts (*TV* (1960) – which features people watching a boxing match on TV), followed by a discussion within the boxing ring with Head of Collections at Aberdeen Art Gallery Helen Fothergill, local councillors, as well as the boxing group members. In the ring, Fothergill also presented boxing-related items from the collection to this group. After this presentation, the boxing group members expressed their thoughts on the new Collection Centre proposal, which were far from complementary, and the metaphor of dialogical 'sparring' is apt to how these discussions developed.



Fig 6.31 *Northfield Boxing Dialogues*, Alice Gamper, Photographic documentation, May, 2014. Image Copyright, Stuart Armitt, 2014.
 Fig 6.32 *Northfield Boxing Dialogues*, Alice Gamper, Photographic documentation, May, 2014. Image Copyright, Stuart Armitt, 2014.

This event was particularly effective at bringing to the surface the negative thoughts towards the concept of a multi-million pound construction being built in their neighbourhood when local services – such as the boxing club – had little or no resources. From this context, a lengthy discussion with these members, Collection staff and the local councillors about the relevance of such a building within Northfield. This event was productive in that the boxers were not only introduced to 'art' that they had never been exposed to before, and had opportunities to find new relationships to that 'art', as well as have opportunities to directly discuss this work with collection staff. The Art Gallery staff, too, gained a better understanding of the needs and requirements of the local community, not to mention the issues the community had with the construction of the Collection Centre. Rather than an ameliorative approach, this was an opened-ended engagement and shows an example of how another artist engaged in a conflictual participatory project to good effect.

6.6.3 Aberdeen Art Gallery: We All Cast Shadows

The final project drew the community group together with the gallery staff in the hopes of forging new relationships. Previous works had revealed and challenged the institutional intent of the Art Gallery (based on colonial notions of 'success') and research in the area had uncovered the negative sentiments towards the construction of the Collection Centre: I therefore aimed to put these two attitudes in a productive

conflict that hoped to birth new subjectivities. This was not planned as ameliorative approach of conflict resolution, but rather hoped to place them in productive conflict that would not eradicate “conflict, division, and instability”⁹⁸ but rather keep them in a productive tension. As the original project had been aligned as an artistic parallel to the Commonwealth Games and as those games were just about to begin, this productive tension utilised the physical methodology of sport as a way to keep groups divided as well as in conflict – and unsure of who the winner would be. This took the form of a competition between the Gallery and the Community of Northfield, with each sporting event being based around items within the collection (*We All Cast Shadows* (AAG7 – see page 187 for more information about this work)).

Additionally, as the division between the groups mostly concerned what would occur on the actual site of the proposed Collection Centre on Granitehill Road, Northfield, we used this location for the competition. The physical presence of relocation and the corporal sensation of being on ‘uncommon ground’ – as with *A Collection of Failure* – was successful in providing a new way of thinking through concepts for the Gallery staff as well as revealed their assumptions that a public should be drawn into the art gallery to experience culture, rather than seeking ‘culture’ outside of the traditional hierarchical structures of the museum/gallery complex. This is equally true for the community who had not been allowed to enter the derelict site where the future Collection Centre would be built. Basing the event on this ‘uncommon ground’ also drew attention to the different conceptualisations of what should happen on that site, placing them in direct conflict, and drawing attention to the impossibility of their mutual success. In this way, the event’s sporting competitions tacitly drew them to an agonistic relationship about the future of the site, rather than the success of their specific utopia. This occurred via physical methodology that allowed a shared way of understanding the division. As Michael Jackson has suggested:

While words and concepts distinguish and divide, bodiliness unites and forms the grounds of empathic, even a universal, understanding... It is because actions speak louder and more ambiguous than words that they are more likely to lead us to common truths; not semantic truths, established by others at other times, but experiential truths⁹⁹

Thus, to encourage communications between different groups of people, this physical understanding was more vital and essential than spoken dialogue because it allows ‘experiential truths to emerge’. In this sense, the conflict was productive in proposing new relationships between the Community and the Art Gallery that was not based on the ‘success’ of either one, but on the productive understanding of each other’s needs, and therefore a more ethical manifestation of a participatory project.

6.6.4 Aberdeen Art Gallery: Conclusion

The first few events of this project did not reveal nor challenge the power structures inherent in the project, and it could be argued they actively obscured the hegemony as the events recapitulated the desires of the institution – the Aberdeen Art Gallery – to impose their notion of culture onto the community. It was not until conflict was introduced in the latter events that the intentions of the institution were revealed and questioned and allowed for the development of an ethical exchange between community and institution regarding the public art collection in Aberdeen. In this sense, conflict was important for this participatory project as it allowed the development of critical and nuanced exchanges. By putting the two groups in competition – in conflict – they were able to forge new relationships and reveal how their mutually oppositional

⁹⁸ R. Deutsche (1996) *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* Cambridge, Mass. MIT Press, 1996. p. 295 – 96 as quoted in C. Bishop, (2004) *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics. October*. Volume 110. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

⁹⁹ M. Jackson (1983) ‘Knowledge of the Body.’ *Man New Series*. 18:2. pp. 327 – 345. p. 344.

utopias could not simultaneously exist, and so the only way forward was an agonistic one.

That conflict was useful and productive could have only emerged because of a committed engagement from both the gallery and the community, in ways that made each group inquire into its intentions against another, and the willingness for both to enter into a conflictual participatory engagement resulted in the productive negotiation of their futures.

6.7 Drama For Life: Privilege Is A Prison

For my final project, I was based in Johannesburg taking part in a 3-month international residency exchange. In 2013, I was contacted by German curator Stefan Horn who invited me to participate in what would eventually become the Nine Urban Biotopes programme. Funded by the German cultural organisation The Goethe Institut, the Nine Urban Biotopes project is:

...an international, socially engaged art project delivering artistic research and cultural exchange. It does this both within and among social citizen and art initiatives in cities in South Africa and Europe in 2014.

The participating initiatives in Paris, Berlin, London, Turin and Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban all distinguish themselves by addressing vital matters of concern with regard to contemporary urban living in innovative ways.... They do so 'on the ground' and 'in the thick of life' in each city, which is the reason why they are referred to as 'urban biotopes' giving the overall project its name.

From January to September 2014, nine artistic projects produced work and research in nine innovative urban settings. Three projects run simultaneously; each for a period of three consecutive months. All of them were participatory in their approach; engaging actively with both citizens and initiators of existing innovative urban development projects.¹⁰⁰

Each artist would be based with a local organisation that had relationships with pre-existing communities and/or contacts for pre-existing communities and/or pre-existing participatory projects for the artist 'piggy-back' upon. This was to ensure that the organisation would be responsible for the relationship with the community – and legacy of the project – and the visiting artist would have the resources of contacts, support, advice and insight from the organisation during the project. Most importantly, however, this was intended to avoid colonial issues of an outsider being parachuted into a foreign context without frameworks to ethically sustain a work in the public realm.

Due to my live and event-based practice, the institution the Urban Biotopes partnered me with in Johannesburg was a subsection of the department of School of Arts at the University of Witwatersrand (Wits) called Drama For Life (DFL). Drama For Life grew out a one-off project hosted the drama department of Wits, organised by current DFL director Warren Nebe and funded by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).¹⁰¹ This original project took the form of a play about HIV/Aids awareness, and from that project, with the further support of GIZ, the Southern African

¹⁰⁰ 'About' Urban Biotopes website (2014). <http://www.urban-biotopes.net>. (Available online – Accessed 20 October, 2014).

¹⁰¹ German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation – an organisation owned and operated by the German Federal government to promote international relations.

Development Committee (SADC),¹⁰² and Wits, Drama for Life developed into a self-contained academic department, launched in 2008. It aims to:

educate "best practice" practitioners in the field of applied drama: theatre in education, communities and social contexts, drama therapy, and drama in education. Through applied drama, Drama for Life engages future leaders in the field to become artists who understand the ethical and contextual issues related to drama that is used as a learning method, drama that shapes research and drama that can be used to bring about social behaviour change.¹⁰³

The apparent commitment to ethical and contextual issues of participating in a public realm combined with concerns within my research about art's supposed ameliorative role as well as its instrumentalisation as tool of social change made the pairing between myself and DFL potentially very fruitful.

This section is the longest of all within the text, due to the project being the most complex, ethically, practically and personally. It is broken into four parts to unravel those complexities. The first describes the works I made predominantly on my own and explore notions of race, economics and identity. The second section explores works that looked into the ethics of institutions being involved in ameliorative participatory projects and attempted to develop an agonistic relationship with DFL. The third describes the parallel approaches I made to participatory projects out with of the institution, attempting to develop my own productively conflictual projects, and the last is a short insight on my physical methodology.

6.7.1 Drama For Life: Participatory Performances

Having grown up in Africa, I was keenly aware of the issues of colonisation and "the burden of history embedded in the landscape"¹⁰⁴ and many of the works I made specifically spoke of my position as a white 'foreigner' (*White Foreigner; Please Help* (DFL3), *White Guy: 0712916414* (DFL4), *Lethabo* (DFL8), *Rainbow Nation* (DFL10) *Racist* (DFL11) and *White Man Steals The Dances Of Women Of Colour* (DFL19)). In these works I was intentionally placing myself in a contentious position to challenge traditions of race and colonisation, as well as speaking about complex place of whites in Africa. These short events and performances happened in the public realm and within them, I explored the concepts put forward by Lewis Hyde in his publication *Trickster Makes This World: How Disruptive Imagination Creates Culture* (1998), Hyde's thesis arises from an ethno-anthropological examination into the character of the 'The Trickster' in various cultures throughout history, from which he suggests the Trickster

is a boundary crosser. Every group has its edge, its sense of in and out, and the trickster is always there, at the gates of the city... He also attends the internal boundaries by which groups articulate their social life. We constantly distinguish – right from wrong, sacred from profane, clean from dirty, male from female, young and old, living and dead – and in every case Trickster will cross the line and confuse the distance... [this definition]

¹⁰² A multi governmental funded agency incorporating 14 Southern African countries whose main objectives are "to achieve development, peace and security, and economic growth, to alleviate poverty, enhance the standard and quality of life of the peoples of Southern Africa, and support the socially disadvantaged through regional integration, built on democratic principles and equitable and sustainable development." 'About' SADC website (n.d.) <http://www.sadc.int/about-sadc/overview/>. (Available online – Accessed 20 October 2014).

¹⁰³ 'History' Drama For Life website (n.d.) <http://www.dramaforlife.co.za/content/page/history>. (Available online – Accessed 20 October 2014).

¹⁰⁴ Z. Minty (2006) 'Post-Apartheid public art in Cape Town: Symbolic reparations and public space', *Urban Studies*, 43:2. pp. 421 – 440. p. 420.

needs to be modified in one important way, for there are also cases in which Trickster creates boundaries; or brings to the surface a distinction previously hidden from sight.¹⁰⁵

Hyde presents this Trickster as an essential part of the human psyche whose purpose is not to fix, but to provide a 'disruptive imagination' that challenges the smooth functioning of hegemonies. In this way, the Trickster enacts productive conflict to cultural and social norms. The two major projects that enacted these types of works were *Art Cannot Help You* (DFL23 – see page 197 for more information about this work) and *Privilege Is A Prison* (DFL29 – see page 199 for more information about this work). The first of these directly addressed the ameliorative intentions of creative institutions such as DFL within Johannesburg, but did not address DFL directly.

The Central Business District (CBD) of Johannesburg is incredibly complex and 'deprived': known for its crime, its poverty and its squatted buildings, it is almost completely devoid of any white residents, who mostly live in the suburbs of the city, in gated communities. Recently the Maboneng area of the CBD had developed into somewhat of a cultural haven as artists and cultural businesses have begun to gentrify the area, taking advantage of the cheap property to occupy warehouses which have been turned into vast art venues. Under the banner of 'social renewal', this area now provides a safe and desirable destination for white/middle class citizens to have reasons to ('safely') enter into the edgy CBD to participate in Sunday brunches, visit art galleries, or frequent many of the high-end restaurants that developed within this area. Unfortunately, this gentrification has also had the effect of pushing out indigenous and local communities who either can no longer afford to live in the area, or are quietly pushed out by the various paid security guards into more cramped housing or into squats in other areas of the city. Despite this, the area is presented as a desirable model of 'art engaging in social renewal' by the CBD Office and invested artists and art organisations, many who have similar ameliorative approaches to DFL's.¹⁰⁶ There is also little analysis of what notions of social renewal are being advocated and who benefits from this gentrification. I was curious to how art was then framed as 'help' and to whom, and so one Sunday I walked with a large sign reading "Art Cannot Help You" from my location at DFL, through the CBD and into Maboneng, inviting discussion with whom ever chose to interact.

The statement existed as a challenging conflict, and I found that within the CBD I had various engagements – with the homeless, shopkeepers, several police, etc. – and most were discordant to my view but very civil. The exchanges often left with handshakes or thanks for the time shared in conversation, and were predominately productive discussions about the relationship between art, poverty and social renewal. However, upon entering Maboneng, I was sworn at, had offensive gestures presented to me and verbally attacked by the visiting Sunday guests. No one would engage in discussion and I left quickly as the aggressiveness was uncomfortable. The difference in responses from those within the CBD in general and those within Maboneng were stark, but reveals that the sign did indeed challenge the dominant hegemony. This work hoped to suggest an alternative model of what art's purpose is as a tool of social renewal by presenting its impossibility, and in this way I enacted the Trickster's 'boundary crossing' methodology in order to bring forth new subjectivities. By challenging the accepted rhetoric of arts being 'good' for social renewal, I was drawing attention to what could also be its negative outcomes.

¹⁰⁵ Hyde, L. (1998) *Trickster Makes This World: How disruptive imagination creates culture*. Edinburgh and London, Canongate. p. 94.

¹⁰⁶ See, for example, 'Building A Community' (n.d.) *Maboneng Precinct Website* <http://www.mabonengprecinct.com/Maboneng20.pdf>. (Available online – Accessed 5 March, 2015) or 'Entrepreneur Profiles – Maboneng Precinct: Jonathan Liebmann' (2013) *Entrepreneur Magazine Website* <http://www.entrepreneurmag.co.za/advice/success-stories/entrepreneur-profiles/maboneng-precinct-jonathan-liebmann/>. (Available online – Accessed 5 March 2015).



Fig 6.33 *Art Cannot Help You*, Photographic documentation, August 2014.

Fig 6.35 *Privilege Is A Prison*, Photographic documentation, September 2014.

Fig 6.36 *Privilege Is A Prison*, Photographic documentation, September 2014.

The second work – *Privilege is A Prison* – explored the rise of the security industry within South Africa. The security services seem to have developed inversely with the fall of Apartheid and now act to delineate a new economic-based Apartheid where those who can afford ‘security’ maintain their position as the elites, separated and segregated out from the rest of the population. Indeed, this division seems to drive a fear of ‘the other’ and perpetuates mis-conceptualisations of desperation and violence of the poor who do not live within gated, safe communities. I was interested in exploring to what extent these protection services become a prison, trapping the culture into a divisive tension between the *haves* and the *have-nots*. I was also interested in how to escape from that dichotomy. I therefore hired an armed guard for a day to shadow me as I went around my daily work at DFL. Both the armed guard (Shandukani ‘David’ Tshipuke) and I signed a contract wherein we agreed that it was his job to constantly protect me, but it was my goal to try and escape from his constant protection. The work problematised notions of ‘security’ as well as image of a white man being guarded/imprisoned by a black security guard in post-apartheid South Africa. This image was further complicated by the presence of – and who held – the firearm. Additionally, like Santiago Serra’s emphasis on the financial transactions involved in labour, this work brought to the fore a myriad of complexities and tensions between paying for services that were actually hindrances to one’s life. Like the Trickster, this functioned to challenge the hegemony of security and race, as well as notions of safety and protection to those who witnessed the day-long event.

All the works mentioned in the above section operated in the same manner in that they challenged notions of race, economics and identity embedded in South African culture, disrupting hegemonies and allowing new subjectivities to develop. They operated by ‘crossing borders’ and offered the potential for transformation to emerge within public and participatory projects. They were participatory projects in that they were short-term and contextually-specific exchanges in specific contexts and the conflict embedded into the methodology presented a challenge to the normal expectations of art’s ameliorative role in post-apartheid South Africa.

6.7.2 Drama For Life: The School of No and other challenges

Before I had arrived in Johannesburg, the staff at DFL and I had email and video exchanges to decide on a brief for my project and we agreed on the following:

With Drama For Life, Anthony Schrag will explore the place of such institutions as tools for social transformation and change, seeking to create public events and projects that playfully explore social conflict.

Collaborating with local neighbourhoods and institutions, his work will

examine 'social betterment' through artistic processes and the ethics that surround these issues.¹⁰⁷

I was keen to explore how 'social betterment' was being framed by the institution, especially in the context as Johannesburg and how that might be different from a Northern European context, especially since:

art's often concealed agency and applied purpose is that of appeasing the systemic crisis of capitalism. In this regard it is telling that socially engaged art practices usually take place within contexts of deprivation and marginalisation in order to bring about social change inspired by the ideals of democracy, equity and equality.¹⁰⁸

As Johannesburg is a site *par excellence* of 'deprivation and marginalisation',¹⁰⁹ I was curious as to how the 9UB project – and specifically my time at DFL – was being positioned as a tool for social change, and how the ethics of that might be negotiated. This pertains to the instrumentalisation of participatory projects and the necessity to address this emerged very quickly after my arrival in the city.

The project had been set up so that I would work with six Masters of Applied Drama students. It was hoped that I would mentor the students in an already-running course titled 'Theatre As Activism', specifically in regards to art within the public realm. In turn, the students would act as assistants on my project. This arrangement was at first appealing to me, as I felt it allowed both myself and the students to compare and contrast the politics of working with people from our different perspectives. Before my arrival, however, as a way to expedite the project, the students were assigned to develop projects that related to the Biotopes aim of "addressing vital matters of concern with regard to contemporary urban living in innovative ways."¹¹⁰ The intention was that the students would seek out sites and communities so that I could begin the project with them promptly upon my arrival. I had not been consulted on this assignment and felt it problematic. In other words, it outsourced the engagement to these students, rather than being with groups or communities that the institution worked with regularly. The students had been tasked to seek out *temporary* communities, rather than lasting, ethical engagements that were sustained by the institution itself.

This assignment also raised an issue about the place of an educational institution within participatory projects and posed the question as to whether the community (and the art) were being instrumentalised for the student's learning, thus making the community the 'materials' of the work – i.e. the assignment presupposed an unequal relationship between the community and the students: the former being a training ground and the latter becoming, to all intents and purposes, experimenters on the community. Additionally, these unequal relationships were further entrenched because the students were operating from the culturally powerful Wits University, with all its resources and capital, whereas the communities some of the students had chosen – the homeless, recent immigrants, jobseekers or a contested site of drug/alcohol abuse – had few resources to resist the advances of the institution. The lack of pre-existing community relationships was therefore problematic, and I felt that the institution's formulation of the project was unethical.

¹⁰⁷ Agreed project brief between DFL, Nine Urban Biotopes and Author – May 2014. Also in Press Material from Urban Biotopes website www.urban-biotopes.net. (Available online – Accessed 20 October, 2014)

¹⁰⁸ A. Rooke & C. von Wissel. (2015) *Sitting Between Chairs: The Role Of The Creative Practitioners in 9UB. 'Report on Nine Urban Biotopes'* on Urban Biotopes website www.urban-biotopes.net. May 2015 (Available online – Accessed 1 March, 2015)

¹⁰⁹ Centre for Social Development in Africa. (2008) *Johannesburg Poverty and Livelihood Study*, Johannesburg. University of Johannesburg.

¹¹⁰ 'About' (2014) 9UB website, www.urban-biotopes.net. (Available online – Accessed 20 October, 2014)

To clarify, I do not suggest that ‘one-off’ ethical participatory works are impossible, examples such as Atelier Public#2 and projects in Timespan above proved otherwise. Similarly, I do not suggest that a temporary community could not be ethically formatted, as the examples just mentioned also prove such an engagement is possible. Rather, I felt it would be ethically problematic for a white foreigner from Northern Europe to enter into a three-month relationship with African communities that had no local, institutional engagement: it would be premised on unequal dynamics and could be construed as colonial.

When I challenged DFL about this lack of pre-existing communities, they countered that they did in fact have a strong and regular relationship with a local school that they visited once every 6 months, and I could work with them, should I wish. I rejected this offer as this was not ‘community/participatory’ relationship as I understood it, as it was ‘educational’, not participatory. It was neither reciprocal with its participants (the students), nor was it consistent because the students changed every year. I argued in a later work – *Sticky Plaster* (DFL24), see below – that they actually held a relationship with the *institution* (the teachers and administrators) but not the participants. I also suggested that the relationship they held was similar to the relationship I have with my dentist: every six months, I see her to be ‘checked-up’. It was a service-based relationship, not dialogical or egalitarian or communal. The institution however did not accept that comparison and I therefore raised this issue of a lack of a ‘community’ with the German partners of the Biotopes project and we attempted to find alternative solutions. During an email exchange that sought to rectify this situation, the following responses were given by DFL to Biotopes project:

Stephan Horn (SH): How has your work relationship with Anthony been for these first five weeks?

Munyaradzi Chatikobo (MC): Our relationship with Anthony is brilliant, everyone is enjoying working with Anthony.

SH: Who is responsible for the implementation of the project from your side?

MC: Tarryn Lee is responsible for the implementation of the project. I oversee [sic] the project

SH: Which are the communities Anthony are [sic] working with?

MC: Hillbrow, Braamfontein and Newtown.¹¹¹

This last response revealed that the issue I was facing was a semantic one: the ‘communities’ of Hillbrow, Braamfontein and Newtown are *areas* within the city of Johannesburg, with an accumulated population close to 1 million people. They are, in fact, *locations* rather than communities, and this perhaps explained the confusion between the institution and myself.¹¹² The rest of the project therefore aimed to speak about the lack of pre-existing community groups connected to DFL, examine the place of an educational institution in participatory projects and focused on unravelling how my social practice was being instrumentalised within a context of ‘deprivation and marginalisation’.

To do this, I repositioned the focus of the ‘biotope’ to DFL itself as it was the only ‘regular and pre-existing’ community I could access. This took the form of several works, such as a reimplementations of the *Daily Conflict* strategy (DFL6) that had been successful in previous projects, as well as *Performative Interviews* (DFL4) and *Weekly*

¹¹¹ Email exchange between Stefan Horn, Munyaradzi Chatikobo, Tarryn Lee, Warren Nebe and the author, 5 August 2014.

¹¹² I felt it additionally problematic that in a post-apartheid South Africa notion of ‘community’ was still being conflated with ‘location’, but this is a larger topic to address.

Walks (DFL9) to challenge the institutional approaches to site and community. The major work of this approach was *The School of No* (DFL16 – see pages 193 & 194) for more information about this work), which was a longitudinal engagement with the Master's students (as well as other interested students who joined the events) and took the forms of interventions, debates and dialogues with students, choirs, and public interventions. The work took the concepts explored in Rancière's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1987) as guiding principle and hoped to challenge the:

assumption that in order to teach, a teacher needs to be in possession of knowledge that s/he can then explain to the students...The inequality which education is designed to address should be remedied not by seeking to transfer knowledge (be it either through progressive or authoritarian means) but by establishing a relationship of equality between master and student, between the one who demands that intelligence manifest itself and the other who develops his or her own intellect.¹¹³

In other words, rather than replicate the dynamic of the students working on communities, or the relationship between DFL and their students, or indeed the assumptions between a colonial outsider and an indigenous community, the goal of the project was to establish 'a relationship of equality'. This reformatted the traditional pedagogical dichotomies and, in doing so, referred back to the 'disruptive imagination' of the Trickster that sought to challenge the regular functioning of DFL in order to reveal understandings, flaws, benefits, as well as the institutional intent towards communities. (*I'm here to help* (DFL12), *Informal Networks* (DFL13) *Logo* (DFL15), *The Criteria of Success* (DFL 16.1), *Invisible Theatre* (DFL 16.2), *Choir of No* (DFL16.4), *UnLearning* (DFL17) and *Space For Dissent* (DFL18)). While each of these works was successful in their individual ways at providing the potential for transformation to the participants and institution, *Space for Dissent* was particularly helpful in challenging the institution's relationship to students, as it reversed the hegemonic ordering of the institution by providing a mechanism for students to critique the format of the programme. Taking the form of an unassuming cardboard box, I invited anyone to write an anonymous note critiquing the structures and staff of DFL. It was aimed to provide an equalising force between student/teacher, and attempted to change the traditional flow of power from 'master' to the 'student'. (See page 195 for more information on this work.) These complaints were then read out to staff in the *Sticky Plaster* (DFL24 – see page 197 for more information about this work) event and caused much consternation that the students were not addressing these issues directly with the staff. The work drew attention to the power differentials that stopped such direct egalitarian exchange from occurring – i.e. it highlighted the systemic hierarchy.

During this event I also presented some of my other research (*Endless Questions* (DFL21), *Songs: Freedom/Sibyls/Song on the Mountain* (DFL22)) and, while dressed as a giant 'sticky plaster,' I proposed that without an ethical, committed and long-term engagement with communities, DFL's actions were merely a sticky plaster over the large wound of Johannesburg's social inequities. This intention of the event was to propose alternative forms of 'working with people' with the suggestion that the institution's interest in amelioration was not necessarily flawed, but could be more successful if it looked at 'systems' rather than 'people'; that a systemic approach could be more ameliorative to more people than merely helping individuals. It was intended as a humorous, aesthetic exchange, but the event culminated in a very terse exchange with the director where I was accused of being oppressive and angry, and that he did not understand why I was attacking the good work they did. While uncomfortable for me and for the rest of the staff, this difficult and disruptive exchange was productive in

¹¹³ C Pelletier. (2008) 'Emancipation, Equality and Education: Rancière's Critique of Bourdieu and the Question of Performativity'. *Discourse*, October. p. 7.

that it revealed the lack of shared discourses around ethics and/or participation, both to me and to the institution.

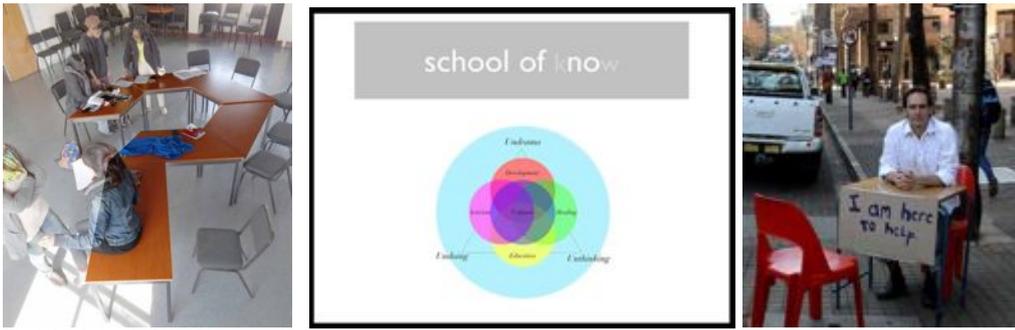


Fig 6.37 *School of No*, Photographic documentation, July 2014.

Fig 6.38 *School of No*, Digital Graphic (Venn Diagram) July 2014.

Fig 6.39 *School of No*, Photographic documentation, July 2014.

Despite the discomfort, however, I reiterated my commitment of forging an agonistic relationship, and so suggested that we discuss a productive way forward that might still include a critique of the institution, but in a manner more suitable to their processes. This culminated in two works; the first was a filmed dialogue (*The Third Space* (DFL25)) with the Programme Manager Munyaradzi Chatikobo in regards to the different understanding we had of the project. This was incredibly productive in finding ‘touchstones’ of discourse and knowledge from which to develop an agonistic way forward. The second was a Drama Therapy process – *Sticky Plaster II (Runaways)* (DFL27 – see page 198 for more information about the work) – with the staff that addressed the issues explored in the original *Sticky Plaster* event, (ethics, participation and amelioration) but in a process more familiar to the organisation. Later, the staff told me that they enjoyed this process more than the conflictually-premised original *Sticky Plaster*, and indeed the experience felt like a convivial, dialogic exchange in line with Bishop’s understanding of Kester’s Dialogic Aesthetics. Her critique of Kester is similarly applicable to this work in that it avoided disruptive imagination:

Kester’s aversion to disruption...self-censors on the basis of second-guessing how others will think and respond. The upshot is that idiosyncratic or controversial ideas are subdued and normalised in favour of a consensual behaviour upon whose irreproachable sensitivity we can all rationally agree. By contrast, I would argue that unease, discomfort or frustration – along with fear, contradiction, exhilaration and absurdity – can be crucial to any work’s artistic impact.”¹¹⁴

For his part, Kester questioned Bishop’s allegiance to the ‘avant-garde’ notion of disruption and instead placed emphasis instead on the dialogic and collaborative model of exchange that operated “outside the avant-garde framework of disruption”¹¹⁵ on the grounds that disruption is ambiguous and collaborative exchange is explicit. The intention of *dialogue* is to have shared meaning/experience, and disruption, in contrast, is based on an unequal premise where one agent imposes a disruption on the other. However, assuming that one *should not* disrupt another refers back to Rancière’s *The Ethical Turn*¹¹⁶ in which an ‘ethical’ imperative elides ‘rights’ and ‘facts’ (or laws), creating an authoritative stance on ‘community’ that promotes an oppressive consensus where difference does not exist. Similarly, as Bishop suggests: “An over-solicitousness that judges

¹¹⁴ C. Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso. p. 26.

¹¹⁵ G. Kester. (2004) *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press. p. 25.

¹¹⁶ J. Rancière, (2006) ‘The Ethical Turn of Aesthetics and Politics’ *Critical Horizons* 7:1 in *Malaise dans l’Esthétique*. Paris: Galilee. 2004. pp. 143 – 173.

in advance what people are capable of coping with can be just as insidious as intending to offend them.”¹¹⁷

Thus, the first iteration of the *Sticky Plaster* was a ‘success’ of an ethically premised conflictual artwork in that – even though it provided incredible unease, both to myself and to the community of DFL – it unravelled where our discourses broke down and showed the mismatch of our goals (one being critical inquiry and one being ameliorative). This unease, unravelling and mismatch was productive in revealing how we each felt the world should be organised, and, in that, proposed different hegemonies to me and to DFL. The commitment to agonism also allowed the development of the second iteration, and while not ‘productive’ in further disruption, it allowed the organisation to inquire into its functions on its own terms. In this sense conflict did provide the context for inquiry – and challenge – of institutional intent, as well as provide the potential for ethical engagements.

6.7.3 Drama For Life: Parallel Productively Conflictual Projects

In parallel to this agonistic approach with the institution, I also developed a strand of works that explored ethical and participatory relationships out with the institution, and how a conflictual work might function in those contexts. The two major works from this strand were *Joburg International* (DFL26 – see page 198 for more information about this work) and *The Usindiso Singers* (DFL20 – see page 195 for more information about this work). Both these works grew out of my frustration with a lack of a pre-existing community with DFL and so sought out my own engagement via self-initiated exchanges with groups and individuals. The first – *Joburg International* – grew out of an exchange with a local barber’s shop next to my apartment. I had noticed a sign outside the business that advertised a ‘Chair for rent, R200.00 per week’¹¹⁸ for freelance hairdressers, and went in to propose that I rent it, not to cut hair, but to sit in and meet people. The jovial and welcoming owners – Cisse and Raul – agreed to the proposal and I rented the chair, visiting the salon and talking with them and their clients for up to 7 hours a day for one week. The discussions gave me insight into the life of Johannesburg, and it was a useful methodology to develop a relationship with a community. I was conscious that my relationship with Cisse and Raul – as well as their clients – was egalitarian and ethical, but was premised on a service exchange and not on an agonistic relationship. I paid for my time in the chair and in return, I developed a documentary film of my time that was screened at a social event at the end of the week. It did not ever develop into a productive conflictual work as the premise of the exchange was transactional rather than agonistic: we had no shared goals to examine. Additionally, as a struggling and fragile small business, I was aware that any disruption to their income could be traumatic and so did not antagonise or challenge their clients or their functioning. To do so would have been unethical and be in moral violation of our agreement. This operated in contrast to DFL (with whom I was actively challenging) because DFL and I had agreed beforehand to explore how “such institutions [are] tools for social transformation and change”¹¹⁹ and therefore the inquiry into how the hegemony of the institution functioned was an inherent part of the project.

While the experience was enjoyable, my time at *Cisse and Raul’s Unisex Hair Salon* did not offer any significant potential for transformation, as conflict could not be enacted ethically. A much lengthier engagement was needed in order to negotiate a conflictual participatory project in an ethical and productive way. In other words, this work was an example of a productive dialogic exchange, a humorous methodology & ‘slice of life’ documentary, but less successful as productive participatory art project.

¹¹⁷ C. Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso. p. 26.

¹¹⁸ This was approximately £10.00 at time of writing.

¹¹⁹ Agreed project brief between DFL, Nine Urban Biotopes and Author – May 2014. Also in Press Material from Urban Biotopes website, www.urban-biotopes.net (Available online – Accessed 20 October, 2014)



Fig 6.40 *JoBurg International*, Photographic documentation, August 2015.
 Fig 6.41 *Usindiso Singers*, Photographic documentation, August 2015.

Similar to this, the Usindiso Ministries work was developed as another way to try to engage with a community due to the lack of pre-existing groups at DFL. The Usindiso Ministry is a charity organisation that supports homeless women and children who have escaped domestic abuse. I had been to the organisation and met the manager at a charity event (see *What does South Africa look like today* (DFL7)), and so when seeking out regular communities with whom to engage in an ethical fashion, I inquired as if I might develop a temporary artwork with them. This was done with the understanding that – as Bishop suggests – a community should be considered to have enough agency to deny an artist working with them.¹²⁰ We agreed to meet once a week for 8 weeks and formed a choir, originally because I heard them singing during the charity event and was very impressed. My intention was to develop a project similar to the Choir of No (DFL16), but out with DFL and then bring them together to compare the different contexts – i.e. to put them into conflict. However, it quickly became apparent that developing such an event would be impossible as the structures to ensure critical relevance was absent: there was no resources, support or shared discourses, as well as a lack of time to develop agonistic relationships. I was also aware of the difficult emotional, financial and social issues the women and children were experiencing and so had to be sensitive to any factors that might upset the group dynamic or the functioning of the ministry.

What developed instead was a temporary choir made up of a group of ladies from similar circumstances singing a song that they enjoyed. From this convivial exchange, I offered the service of developing a video/audio recording of their singing in exchange for the time we spent together. This has been developed into a fundraising tool for the ministry. This does suggest a long-term ameliorative exchange (the institution can be financially supported by sales of this video/audio recording of the song), however, this was based on an exchange of services rather than the power of art to be ameliorative: power dynamics were not challenged, hegemonies were not revealed, and the potential for transformation was not presented. This does not denigrate the quality of their singing or commitment to the project or the ‘final outcome’, only that a conflictual participatory art project could not exist because of the lack of support structures.

What both these works do is highlight the lack of support structures that an artist working out with of an institution must face, and how a lack of support structures deny the development of productive participatory artworks in a temporary context. These structures include resources, time and sustained pre-existing relationships. The lack of these structures meant that both works became service exchanges rather than artistic inquiries: they maintained the status quo and neither of the projects resulted in the ‘potential for transformation’ in any obvious or meaningful way. In contrast, working with DFL to challenge their hegemonies and institutional intents allowed new

¹²⁰ C. Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso. p. 26.

subjectivities and the potential for transformation to emerge. This points towards the practical necessity of an institution being involved in temporary participatory projects, and that a productive tension with the institution – an agonistic relationship – must exist in order for ethical participatory artworks to occur.

6.7.4 Drama For Life: A Short Note On An Embodied Approach

In previous research – *Shinty, Wrestling History, Fight Club, Bulldog, Make Destruction, We All Cast Shadows*, to name a few examples – I have focused on a bombastic physicality that could both act as metaphor and alternative insight to the topics I was addressing. The corporeal also acted as a technique to draw people into projects by offering a mechanism of engagement that was not based upon ‘artistic’ traditions (i.e. painting or craft workshops) but rather based on daily experiences.

While there were several overtly physical works within this project (*Climb*, (DFL1) *Weekly Walks, Informal Networks, White Man Steals the Dances Of Women Of Colour*, and *Privilege Is A Prison*,) the methodological approach lay in longitudinal, embodied actions that was much more subtle than previous projects. This embodied approach developed accidentally soon after my arrival when I required a foam mattress for my apartment, so I walked to a Middle-Eastern/Indian market about 30 min from my apartment to find one. Once I had purchased it, I decided to carry it on my head back to my apartment as it wasn’t heavy, and I also thought could save some money by not renting a taxi. On my return walk, I noticed that everyone was laughing at me and I realised that I was performing a subversive act: the embodied location of a white man in South Africa is not on the street, but to drive/be driven everywhere, it is not to be carrying unwieldy things, it is not to carry things on his head – that is the embodied role of a black woman. I was therefore playing a role unintentionally, and, like the Trickster, was challenging the hegemonies by crossing the boundaries between what is expected and what is not.

I began to take this on as an intentional methodology and explored other ‘non-white’ embodied actions – for example, the Zulu tradition of touching one’s arm when giving or taking anything (to ascribe value to both the exchange and the object)¹²¹ – but also walking in ‘non-white’ areas such as the CBD, consciously and physically taking on the body movements and actions of a non-white community. The decision to do this stemmed from the field of Embodied Cognition that suggests: “embodiment seems to be at the root of seemingly disparate relationships between higher-order thoughts and basic bodily action.”¹²² It is a study that broadly recognises cognitive and identificatory processes are inherently ‘embodied’. In other words, our understanding of the world primarily stems from the body’s physical perceptions, and these in turn shape both ontological frameworks, but also mental and conceptual frameworks. The embodied actions of ‘blackness’ or ‘Zulu-culture’ that a white man therefore performed aimed to complicate and highlight not only the porous nature of the cultures, but to problematize *who* should enact them. (See page 192 for more information on this work.)

This is/was very difficult to document (see Chapter 5 on Physicality – 5.2 *The Aesthetics of Physicality, or A Non-Visio-centric Ontology*) but none-the-less became a through-line to the entire residency, providing opportunities to not only cross boundaries and challenge the essentialised actions of skin colour, gender and culture, but provided new opportunities for engagement. The most telling of this is the exchanges developed with the Domestic Worker of DFL, Matlakala ‘Sylvia’ Mogodinyana. I would often sit with her and her colleagues on the floor of an empty classroom to each lunch together. When we first did this, I was asked “You are not like

¹²¹ ‘ZuluLand’ (2012) Reach Out Volunteers website. http://rovolunteers.com/website_zululand.pdf. (Available online – Accessed 5 March 2015)

¹²² E. Balçetis, E. & S. Cole. (2009) Body in Mind: The Role of Embodied Cognition in Self-Regulation *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 3:5. pp. 759-774.

other white people, are you?!”¹²³ suggesting that other white people did not sit this way with black domestic workers and the choice to have a shared physical experience with them allowed the development a series of filmed songs (*Songs: Freedom/Sibyls/Song on the Mountain* (DFL21)) that would not have emerged unless I had sat with them on the floor. In other words, by embodying the similar actions, I was able to find shared points of engagement and discourse. These actions were not to validate my non-colonial stance or to placate a sense of white-guilt, but rather – like in previous projects – this physical methodology allowed for an appropriate engagement for the sensitive topics at hand.

In his work “Knowledge of the Body” Michael Jackson gives the metaphor of lighting a fire while on anthropological fieldwork in Sierra Leone in 1970. At first, he said he was careless and annoyed by the daily chore to light a fire, and this fire was never any use – always going out, never starting easily, etc. After a while, he watched the way the people with whom he was living lit their fire with careful consideration, using particular size of wood at specific times and in a particular manner and in mimicking this, he discovered his fire became much more efficient and successful. He wrote:

To break the habit of using a linear communicational model of understanding bodily praxis, it is necessary to adopt a methodological strategy of joining in without ulterior motive and *literally putting oneself in the place of another person: inhabiting their world. Participation thus becomes an end in itself.*¹²⁴

In this way, he argues that to understand a culture, one literally should embody it, and this in itself becomes central to understanding it. This was most obviously true in such a different culture to my own as Southern Africa, however, in reflecting on this exchange with Matlakala on the floor of an empty classroom, I recognise how true this has been of all my projects – from playing Shinty in Helmsdale to becoming a fellow office worker in Glasgow Life. Physicality allows an understanding that promotes affective as well as ethical exchanges.

6.7.5 Drama For Life: Conclusion

The final report of the Nine Urban Biotope project provides a succinct conclusion to my project:

Anthony Schrag... took on the role of the antagonist. He operated as the possibly arduous but eventually helpful provocateur that allows reconsidering one’s own perspective and relational position. In his art, Anthony enacts what Sophie Hope has explored as the figure of the “critical friend” (Hope, 2011). By means of successive performative interventions he pushed for dialogue with his host organisation, urging them to resist both their routine and success, and to take the time and space for questioning the core of their practice with its underlying assumptions of the concepts of art and participation. Particularly disputed here were competing notions of art either as healing power or as the site of (positive) struggle; pointing to philosophically distinct paths for achieving better futures: either as *overcoming* conflict by means of achieving consensus; or as *channelling* conflict in what Chantal Mouffe has coined ‘agonistic pluralism’.¹²⁵

¹²³ Matlakala ‘Sylvia’ Mogodinyana, Domestic Worker at DFL to author July 2015.

¹²⁴ M. Jackson. (1983) ‘Knowledge of the Body’. *Man New Series*. 18:2. pp. 327 – 345. p. 341. (Emphasis added).

¹²⁵ A. Rooke & C. von Wissel. (2015) *Sitting Between Chairs: The Role Of The Creative Practitioners in 9UB. ‘Report on Nine Urban Biotopes’* on Urban Biotopes website www.urban-biotopes.net. (Available online – Accessed 1 March, 2015)

The project took two main foci, the first being participatory public projects that I enacted with a Trickster methodology that incorporated conflict to provide new subjectivities of race, economics and identity via 'border crossings'. The second focus explored the institution's exchanges with communities, and via inducing conflict, I was able to inquire into the institutional intent of the organisation and challenge their functioning and hegemony. It also provided the opportunity to develop a productive agonistic relationship that, were there more time, could have evolved into a more fruitful exchange between DFL and myself. Additionally, in having to seek out other non-institutionally supported relationships revealed the impossibility of conflictual participatory projects to develop without institutional structures to support both the community and the artist. Physicality and an embodied approach ensured an egalitarian and tacit relational bond that was useful in both forming engagements, but also challenging the subtle actions that perpetuate relationships.

6.8. Conclusion: Pro-Social Conflict

In 2011, before I had begun the above research, I had been invited to develop a project with South London Gallery (SLG). The project was to address the growing, postcode/territorial gang culture that was developing between the two housing estates close to the SLG. The brief was not to try to eradicate this conflict, as SLG felt that was an external, colonial approach, but rather find a productive way to reveal and discuss the conflict. The event I developed was called *Who is Offside?: An Inter-Estate Football Match* and it was literally an 'inter-estate' match, with one goal on one housing estate and one goal on the other. The game featured two 35-a-side teams from either housing estate with the field of play being the entirety of the two estates including a main road, a parking lot, several green-spaces, a few playgrounds and a shopping area. It operated as a manifestation of the conflict between the housing estates, but also as a mechanism through which to explore and experience the opposition's territory in a 'safe' manner. From this event, SLG's Head of Education Francis Williams and Children & Families' Coordinator Jack James coined the term 'Pro-Social Conflict' in response – and in opposition – to the term 'anti-social' behaviour policies of New Labour's Social Inclusion Unit.

The notion of 'Pro-Social Conflict' has been a subtext to the research I have conducted during this study in that I have explored how conflict can be productive within participatory art projects, as above. There has also been a parallel secondary question to this that looked at revealing and challenging the 'institutional intent' within participatory art projects – i.e. in what ways institutions frame and instrumentalise the practice, and – tangentially – why it might be useful to resist instrumentalisation. Applying a physical methodology – which has functioned both as a tool of engagement and mechanism to provide new and alternative insights – the insights garnered suggest that far from being anti-social, conflict has proved incredibly productive to the social realm, and draws into question the very formulation of 'the social'. I explore these productive elements of conflict and the contribution this research has made to the practice in the final, concluding chapter.

7. Conclusion

The above practice-led participatory practice research has been an inquiry into the critical and political potentials of participatory practices sited in institutional contexts. Driving the inquiry were the following research questions:

How can conflict be productive within participatory art practices?

How can conflict reveal and challenge 'institutional intent' within participatory art projects?

What is the role of physical methodologies within participatory practices?

The previous chapter drew together the practical works of this three-year research and combined it with the theoretical frameworks including Mouffe's notion of Agonism and 'engagement' with institutions, Foucault's suggestion of *Gouvernementalité*, Galtung's understanding of conflict, as well as Embodied Cognition and an adapted understanding of the Michael Jackson's Anthropology of the Body. Considered holistically, the thesis has showed that a conflictual approach to participatory projects is productive in highlighting the (often obscured) instrumentalisation of institutions (see, for example, *Glasgow Life: Policy Artefacts*, pages 97 – 104); in challenging the functioning of the dominant hegemony (see, for example, *Timespan: There Shall Be Blood*, pages 87 – 97); and in providing a platform for egalitarian, intra-social interaction (see, for example, see *Atelier Public#2: Make Destruction*, pages 114 – 122). These concerns are important to address as participatory practices involve 'real, lived lives', in 'real, lived contexts' as opposed to the inert materials of artists producing objects such as paintings or sculptures, and applies ethical imperatives to the practice. A conflictual approach to participatory practices was therefore productive in drawing attention to the agency of all participants (including those within the institution).

The research has also shown that conflictual participatory practices can not only uncover, but also confront, the institutional intent towards participative projects, and it does so by presenting new subjectivities and providing a context where alternative perspectives – both social and institutional – are given form. Consider *Atelier Public#2: Make Destruction* (pages 114 – 122) wherein not only the expectations and framing of the participatory experience of the institution was challenged, but so too was the public's engagement, as well as my own assumptions and approaches, thus providing all involved in the project with critical ways of thinking about the form, function and experience of participatory art. Additionally, the project did not recapitulate ameliorative nor prescriptive expectations participatory practices, but were rather based in conflict and dissensus. This approach suggests that emancipatory possibilities of the practice are possible when decoupled from mechanisms of politics (in a Mouffian sense of the word) and instead inquires into the political structures of lived life.

The research process was entrenched in the daily lives and exchanges of both communities and institutions via residency contexts which employed a physical methodology. This physical approach proved to be a vital mechanism of engagement that allowed me to reach a wide cross-section of the public(s), but also an approach through which the very embodied nature of participatory work gained form. My project with the Aberdeen Art Gallery (pages 122 – 127) elucidated how long-term physical presence is required to fully understand an institution's intent, but also the configuration and desires of a community. This grew out of an understanding that externally based, short-term visitations to a context are insufficient to 'work with people', unless pre-existing relationships and structures exist to support an artist being 'parachuted' into that context. The notion that the institution should 'hold' these relationships was explored in depth in my project with Rúa Red (pages 108 – 114) and the complexities of that project – the mismatch of ethical frameworks, our different expectations of

project outcomes, and the differences in conceptual framing of the practice – suggest that further analysis is required to consider how an institution can maintain long-term, ethical and social relationships without becoming prescriptive or uncritical.

My practice-led research was grounded in a physical methodology that drew from the theories of Embodied Cognition and Anthropology of the Body. These approaches formulated the practice of ‘working with people’ in a manner that contrasts the contemporary ‘outreach’ model of participatory practices in that it disengaged the artistic process from the production of ‘visual objects’ for gallery/museum spaces and also problematised the ‘products’ of public engagement. The field of Embodied Cognition presented the body as the touchstone of aesthetic experience, which – while certainly not a ‘universal’ touchstone – could act as a translation mechanism through which the very corporeal engagement of participatory practices could be given aesthetic form. Michael Jackson’s Anthropology of the Body was useful to consider how a shared corporeal experience provided a shared social and cultural knowledge, and gave the basis for the residency-led approach. Jackson’s colonial approach proved problematic, however, and I turned to Collaborative Anthropology to provide mechanisms by which to resist the colonial urge of turning the ephemeral social exchange into objects for consumption by non-involved (art) entities. Furthermore, in basing the aesthetic experience in the corporeal, the work did not defer to the authority of the museum/gallery constructs, but rather based the work in egalitarian and ethical exchanges of physicality that explored of the politics of the social realm, as well as the place of those art institutions within that realm.

Formulating the practice in such a physical manner, however, calls for further analysis on how non-object based documents (stories, events, actions, relationships, myths, etc.) – which are the appropriate translation of the ideas and concepts of participatory projects – can be incorporated into an artistic tradition without being colonised/transformed into aesthetic objects. My own personal trajectory through this research has wrestled with these “mediating object(s)”¹ and via the research I have re-framed my understanding of documentation as a ‘secondary artwork’. This is in order to sustain the primacy of the shared, ephemeral, dialogic and conflictual event, but still value the contribution of documentation to an art historical legacy, as well as valuing this type of work as ‘art’. These understandings of the role of ‘physicality’ within participatory practices comprise one of the two unique contributions to the field.

The second contribution lies in the development of a productive, agonistic relationships *with* institutions that stands apart from the traditional activist and/or popular political works that seek an ‘exodus’ from pre-existing systems – i.e., the recent Occupy movements. In this way, the work included in this research has presented new, relational models with institutions that neither defers to the ameliorative or instrumental approach, nor to activist intentions. Rather, it reorganises the contemporary formulations into something that can be critical *with* institutions and publics, and re-conceptualises the genre as being inexorably tied to institutions. Linked to this is the understanding that the social realm is, at base, a constant conflictual negotiation, and communities implicitly understand the productive nature of conflict. An example of this was my project in Helmsdale (*There Shall Be Blood*, pages 87 – 97) wherein the exploration of a historical event was unravelled through a contemporary conflict, and the conflictual participatory project gave form to the questions the community felt important to ask, both for the social realm, and for the commissioning institution. Working with the institutions via conflict then proved to be productive for the institution in that challenged their own intentions towards the public, but also for the ‘public’ of Helmsdale, as it provided a form to address the incomer/local discourse of the village. It was only working alongside and with the institution in a critical yet agonistic manner, however, that this could have occurred. The reformulation of the relationship *with*

¹ C. Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London, Verso. p. 9.

institutions is significant shift in thinking about the practice that has, historically, been engaged in an exodus from institutional structures.

This way of working occurred most effectively when both the institution and the artist had aligned methodologies and ethics, as explored with *Drama for Life* (pages 127 – 129). Here, particularly, there was a mismatch between myself and the institution, both in terms of approaches (theatrical Vs. artistic) as well as expectations of the practice (ameliorative Vs. agnostic) and much of the time and effort of the project was expended in the negotiation of our differences and desired endpoints, rather than on the project itself. The project would have therefore benefitted from a more effective lead-in period to understand our positions, rather than a sudden start. This paves the way for deeper inquiry into *how* conflictual participatory practices can be supported in new critical and political formulations, including an understanding of how policy could be framed generatively. Mouffe's notion of Agonism has been a key methodology in thinking through this approach, and considering the problematics of the *Drama for Life* project, further research is needed into exploring how those agonistic relationships can be established. My work with GMRC and *Glasgow Life: Testament* (pages 104 – 108) revealed that groups, institutions and individuals need to be prepared to be self-critical before that criticality can occur. The projects I embarked on with these groups were not as productive as those projects wherein the institution was not only ready for an agonistic approach, but also actively sought it out. This raises questions for proponents of agonism – like Mouffe – as to how such approaches might be developed or negotiated in their inception. In other words, how does an institution and artist productively negotiate an entrance to an agonistic relationship that does not foreclose the possibility of criticality and/or challenge and/or the opportunity for new subjectivities to arise? To forcibly enter an agonistic relationship presents a paradox: if an institution is not ready to be self-critical, to demand an agonistically critical perspective might suggest an un-ethical, activist approach, which would be antithetical to the agonist methodology. This paradox opens up new avenues of research in regards to conflict and participatory practices within institutional settings.

From this research, I am also left with a question about how to *sustain* an agonistic approach within institutionally supported participatory projects. Nuno Sacramento and Claudia Zeiske's 'Shadow Curator'² approach offers a potential solution in that their methodology calls for an entrenched critical voice throughout the participatory process. I am, however, cautious about the formalisation of such a role into the institution and this caution stems from my critique of Markus Meissen's *Cross-Bench Politician* (page 67) in that the 'otherness' of a critical approach can become subsumed, as any transgressive element can become co-opted and nullified by the dominant hegemony over time, as Gramsci suggests.³ Rather, the question of sustainability is whether or not such critical, agonistic approaches to institutions and participatory practices could – or should – ever be subsumed into an institutional framework and be a formula of institutional practice. Might they, instead, retain their criticality in their temporality, ephemerality and outsider/other-ness?

I hesitate to suggest that the findings in this thesis are monolithic, and would not promote a singular utopian model of participatory practices because, as a practitioner, I recognise that there are multiple methods and processes for 'doing' the genre. However, this research has revealed a unique and significant framing of the practice that contributes new subjectivities about this way of working, both to the field, and to myself. In my introduction, I wrote:

² Sacramento, N & Zeiske C. (2010) *Artocracy: A curatorial handbook for collaborative practice*. Berlin: Jovis.

³ C. Mouffe. (2007) 'Agonistic Politics and Artistic Practices' (Lecture) Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow, 2nd March, and Hoare, Q. & Howell-Smith, G. (eds & trans) [1971] (2005) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. New York, International Publishers

At the time, I did not have the academic language to explain the philosophical conceptualisation of *Legacy*... rather, it came from a tacit understanding of power relations and a desire to subvert them.

Placing the practice-led research in parallel with theoretical formulations has not only given me the academic language that previously I lacked, but it has also challenged my work in both its form and function. My assumptions at the start of this study was that I would develop antagonistic relations with institutions; that the political formulation of the practice was fundamentally to stand against oppression; and that my work would not change over time, but rather I would simply develop a better way to talk about it.

Instead, through the practice, the residency approach has led to a deeper relational understanding of institutions as being comprised of people – flawed, passionate people – and via the residential, physical approach, I have re-conceptualised ‘antagonistic approaches’ into productive agonistic relationships, both with institutions and communities. This led to an understanding of Mouffe’s ‘political’ vs. ‘politics’ (as well as the difference between ‘educative’ and ‘participative’ approaches) and I shifted my focus from the possible emancipation of participants to the emancipatory possibilities of the practice itself. I also realised the need to pay more attention to the aesthetic results of documentation, exploring the site of the work, and allowing my own approaches to be challenged. Indeed, the physicality approach also helped me challenge my working methods: consider the bombastic physicality of *shinty!* (page 95) and how it compares to the more tempered yet more effective *Embodied Critique* I developed at Drama For Life, 2 years later (page 137). Additionally, too, conflict has shifted from being posited as direct, a binary confrontation (i.e. *Badges*, page 91) to a broader reading of the amorphous and multiple manifestations of conflict that occurred in *Atelier Public#2* (page 113). Reflecting on these shifts, I have personally developed a more nuanced understanding of conflict within the participatory realm, and through the research, have attempted to develop conversations about participatory practices with institutions to share such learning.

Indeed, the work I undertook in this research could be seen as an extended conversation with institutions. In thinking about this, I find it fitting that an old Scots term for conversation is *Clash*.⁴ A modern connotation of the same word is a: “violent confrontation; an incompatibility leading to disagreement.”⁵ There is a physicality to the modern usage too – both bodies and ideas in flailing, violent conflict – that is resonant with this study. However, I find the Scots word to be a pleasing contrast as it infers a discussion, a chit-chat, a ‘wee gossip’. The two definitions combined offer a generative metaphor for this thesis and suggests new formulations of participatory practices that fills me with hope about the conflictual and ethical potentials of this way of working with people.

⁴ ‘Clash’, *Dictionary of the Scots Language*. (n.d.) http://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/snd/clash_n1. (Available online - Accessed 28 May 2015)

⁵ ‘Clash’ Oxford Online Dictionary (n.d.) <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/clash> (Available online - Accessed 28 May 2015)